



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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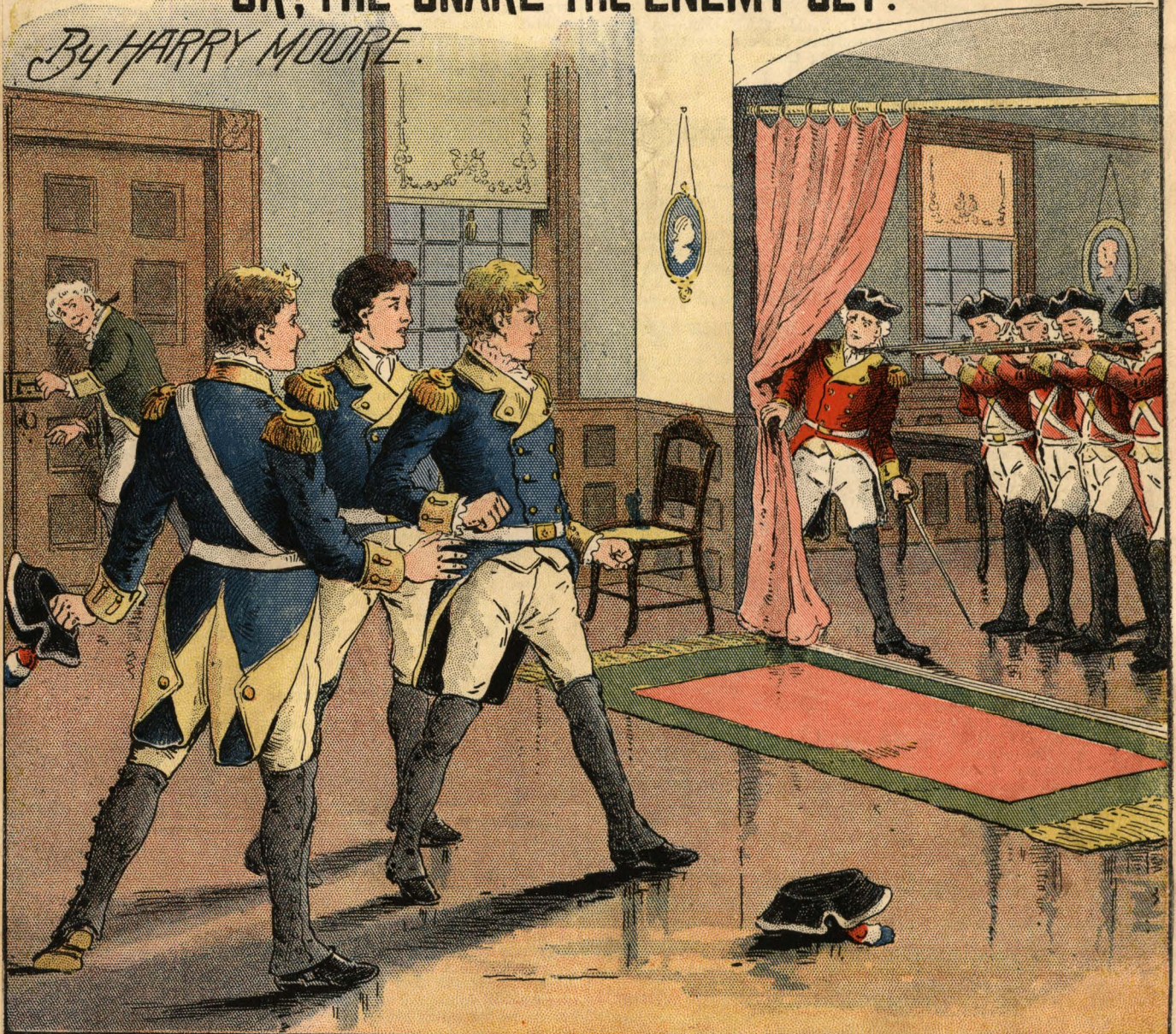
No. 71.

NEW YORK, MAY 9, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS LURED ; OR, THE SNARE THE ENEMY SET.

By HARRY MOORE.



The man locked the door the instant the "Liberty Boys" were in the room, and as the key clicked a portiere was suddenly drawn aside and the youths found themselves confronted by a dozen redcoats holding cocked and leveled muskets.

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NEW YORK, MAY 9, 1902.

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CHAPTER I.

DICK AND THE TORY YOUTHS.

"Well, what d'ye think erbout et, Mister Rebel?"

"I am not a rebel."

"Oh, ye hain't?"

"No."

"What are ye, then?"

"I am a patriot."

"Et's all ther same."

"You may think so, but I don't."

"Whur's ther diff'rence?"

"There is lots of difference."

"I don't see et."

"Well, I do."

"Whut is ther difference atween er rebel an' er patriot?"

"A rebel is one who is fighting against genuine authority; while a patriot is one who is fighting against unjust authority—one who is fighting for freedom and independence."

"I don' see no diff'rence."

"As I said a while ago, I don't suppose you do. Your head is too thick, Joe Scroggs."

"Whut's thet!"

"You heard what I said."

"I know I did; an' ye think my head is thick, d'ye?"

"I know it."

"Thet's all right, Dick Slater! I think I'll be able ter prove, afore we git through with you, that yer head is ez thick ez mine."

"You think so, do you?"

"Yas, I do."

"Bah! What do you want, anyway, Joe Scroggs, and the rest of you fellows? Why have you stopped me?"

It was a cool but pleasant afternoon in November, of the year 1776. A handsome youth of perhaps eighteen years sat upon a coal-black horse, which looked like a thoroughbred, as indeed it was. The youth had blue-gray

eyes, long, brown hair, and firm chin and well-chiseled features. He looked as if he were a youth whom it would not do to trifle with. Such was, indeed, the fact, for he was Dick Slater, who had only a short time before organized a company of youths of about his own age, and gone into the patriot army. The company was known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

In front of the youth, in the middle of the road, were four youths of about his own age; but they were not the frank, handsome-looking fellows that he was. These four were Tory boys, and their leader, Joe Scroggs, was a deadly enemy to Dick Slater.

Dick was headed toward the south, but while riding along the road, at a point two or three miles south of White Plains, the youths in question had suddenly leaped out into the road in front of his horse and brought him to a stop. In reply to Dick's question regarding what they wanted, Joe Scroggs said:

"We hev some bizness with ye."

"Some business with me?"

"Yas."

"Well, state it quickly for I haven't any time to fool away."

"Oh, ye hev'n't!"

"No."

"But ye kain't he'p yerse'f, ye know. Ye kain't go till we let ye."

The youth on horseback laughed in a half amused, half scornful manner. "You say I can't go away till you let me?" he asked.

"Thet's whut I said."

"Well, then, all I have to say is that you are a bigger fool than I took you to be, Joe."

"Oh, ye think I'm er fool, do ye?"

"Yes, if you think you can keep me from going on my way."

"I s'pose ye air shore thet I don' know ennythin', hey?"

"Well, I never did give you credit for knowing a great deal, Joe."

"Oh, ye never, hey?"

"No."

"An' I s'pose ye think ye know et all?"

"Oh, no," with a smile; "I am aware that there is considerable that I don't know."

"An' ye think ye kin ride right on whenever ye git red dy ter do et, hey?"

"There is nothing to hinder."

Joe indicated himself and three companions. "Whut erbout us?" he asked.

Dick smiled. "The four of you can't keep me from going, if I wish to do so," he said quietly; "and I'm going to go, too, if you don't state your business very quickly. I can't waste my time sitting here."

"Oh, no, ye won't go!" Joe said this with an air of confidence that surprised Dick.

"You think not?" he said.

"I'm shore ye won't. Look heer." Then Joe uttered a whistle, and out from among the trees at both sides of the road leaped at least a score of youths of about Dick's age.

Dick was surprised, but no one to have looked at him would have thought so. He did not show it at all, and there was even a smile on his face which the same as said, "I knew what was coming."

Joe was disappointed, but he tried not to let on. He had confidently counted on causing a look of dismay to come over the face of the youth he hated, and was angry because of his failure to do so.

"Now, whut d'ye think erbout et?" cried Joe, with considerable of triumph showing on his face.

"What do I think about what?"

"Erbout goin' wenever ye git red dy ter."

"Why, I think just as I did before. State your business at once, or if you haven't any business, just say so and I will ride onward."

"Oh, ye still tork thet way, do ye?" with an angry look and sneer.

"Certainly. Why not?"

Joe waved his hand to indicate the score or more of youths.

"Oh, they don't cut any figure!" smiled Dick. "But what have you to say to me? You haven't told me why you have waylaid and stopped me."

"Then I'll tell ye now."

"Do so."

"I will. I hev stopped ye heer this arternoon fur ther purpuss uv gittin' revenge onter ye."

"Of getting revenge?"

"Yas."

"For what?"

"For killin' my father!"

Dick's face lighted up. "Oh, I understand it now," he said; "but you are making a mistake, Joe, in trying to get revenge on me."

"W'y so?"

"For the reason that, although I did kill your father, he deserved death at my hands. He shot my father down in cold blood, in front of our house, as you well know."

"I dunno ennythin' uv ther kin'."

"Yes, you do. You know it very well. And you know, too, that I was justified in shooting your father."

"I don' know enny sech thing!" said Joe, doggedly.

"Of course, I don't expect you to acknowledge it," said Dick, "but it is the truth, just the same."

"Et hain't ther trooth, an' I'm goin' ter hev revenge onter ye!"

"What are you figuring on doing, Joe?" the horseman asked quietly.

"Whut am I goin' ter do?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I think I'll take ye an' tie ye ter er tree an' then we fellers'll all take switches an' give ye er good larrupin'."

"Oh, that's the programme, is it?"

"Yas."

"A very nice programme, indeed. There is only one weak point in it."

"Whut is thet?"

"You haven't taken into consideration the fact that I may object."

"Whut good'll et do ye ter object?" Joe waved his hand around to indicate the youths.

"A good deal of good, I fancy. I'll tell you, Joe, you had better take your friends and go your way, for if you make any such attempt as you are figuring on doing it will go hard with you."

"Bah!" sneered Joe; "ye kain't do nothin' erg'instant twenty uv us."

"I may surprise you."

"I hain't erfeerd."

"Humph! you don't know enough to be afraid. But who are these young fellows, anyway, Joe? I mean what are they supposed to be? I know the names of a number of them, but I would like to know what you call yourselves as a whole? Or, did you just get together for this one occasion?"

Joe shook his head. "No, we're er ban'," he said.

"A band, eh?"

"Yas."

"What is the name of your band?"

"Ther 'Turrible Twenty.' "

"The 'Terrible Twenty,' eh?"

"Yas."

"What is the object of the organization?"

"Thet's our bizness," shortly.

"Oh, all right; I don't care to know particularly. I didn't suppose you would wish to keep it secret."

"Waal, et's our bizness, ennyway; so don' ax enny more questions."

"Say, are you the fellows who have been burning the haystacks and stealing things which belong to the patriots in this vicinity?" asked Dick suddenly. "And are you the chaps who burned my father's stable a week ago and set fire to the house?"

"Thet's none uv yer bizness!" said Joe, surlily.

"Well, I think it is my business. If I was sure you fellows did that I would teach you a lesson, right now and here, that you would remember for a while!" Dick's eyes flashed in a dangerous manner, and his teeth came together with a click. There was no mistaking the fact that he was in earnest.

"Bah!" sneered Joe; "ye wouldn't teeche us nothin'."

"You would find out your mistake very quickly, Joe, if I was sure you did that work," said Dick quietly. "If you don't believe me, just say that you did it and see for yourself!"

"Bah! I hain't ergoin' ter say nothin'. Bet et's no use torkin' enny longer; we're goin' ter give ye er lambastin', and so ye might ez well take et without enny kickin'. Git down off'n yer hoss!"

"Get off my horse?"

"Yas."

"What for?"

"I've tole ye whut for, two er three times. Git down, I tell ye!"

"Get down and permit myself to be whipped by your gang of cowardly curs?" cried Dick. "I guess not! I know a trick worth two or three of that. At them, Major!"

The black horse had stood quietly while the conversation was going on, but at the word from his master the animal suddenly became very much alive. Major suddenly gave utterance to a fierce snort of anger, and rearing up on his hindlegs began striking at the youths with his front hoofs, and biting at them.

This action on the part of the horse was so unexpected that the youths were given a terrible scare. Indeed, several of them were knocked down by the horse's hoofs, and this

caused all to scatter and get out of reach with all possible haste.

"Ther hoss is er demon!" yelled Joe, as he made a dive for the safest place he could think of—the edge of the timber.

"He'll kill us all!" yelled another of the youths.

They managed to get away out of reach, however, and then Dick whirled the horse and rode away a distance of twenty yards and there he stopped and looked back, with a smile on his face.

"What do you think about it now, Joe?" he called out.

"Are you still thinking of giving me that thrashing?"

"We'll kill ye!" howled Joe in reply. "We'll kill ye ther very fust chance we git!"

"Well, you have the chance right now. Why not come on and do the killing?"

"Thet's all right; ye air sassy enuff, now, but ye'll see ther time w'en ye won't be so sassy!"

"It will be when your 'Terrible Twenty' has grown in numbers to a 'Horrible Hundred,' then, Joe," was the mocking reply; "twenty of you can do nothing with me!"

"Oh, we kain't, hey?"

"No."

"Waal, we'll show ye! Giv' 'im er volley, fellers! Le's kill 'im!"

Following the words came the crack! crack! of pistol shots. Bullets whistled past Dick, but fortunately none struck him.

"So they are armed and really mean business?" murmured the youth. "I've a good mind to teach them a lesson!"

As he spoke he drew two pistols, and, turning his horse's head, rode back toward the spot where the youths were, at a gallop. When within a few paces of the spot he fired two shots into the edge of the timber. He fired at random, as he saw no one, but one of his shots must have done some damage, for a voice cried out: "Oh, I'm shot! I'm killed! Oh, oh, oh!"

"That was Joe's voice!" thought Dick; "I'm glad I hit him, though I hope I haven't mortally wounded him."

CHAPTER II.

DICK TO THE RESCUE.

Dick did not think the "Terrible Twenty" would have courage enough to stay and fire upon him again, and in this surmise he was correct. He heard the sound of scam-

pering feet and the crackling of brush, and knew that the youths were running away at the top of their speed. As he heard no more from Joe he decided that that worthy had not been seriously hurt.

"He was worse scared than injured, I judge," said the youth, with a smile. "Well, I have put the 'Terrible Twenty' to flight so I might as well go on."

Dick turned his horse's head and rode onward toward the south a distance of perhaps two miles, and then came to a stop in front of a good-sized stone house situated on a little knoll a hundred yards back from the road. As he brought Major to a stop, Dick was startled by hearing a scream, in the shrill voice of a woman.

"Help! help!" was the cry. "Help—murder! Help!"

"Jove! what can be the trouble?" thought Dick; but he was off his horse like a flash, even as the question flashed through his mind, and the next instant he was running toward the house at his best speed.

The front door of the house was closed, and as the screams had seemed to come from the back of the house Dick swerved to one side and ran around the house. As he turned the corner he saw a beautiful girl of perhaps eighteen years struggling in the grasp of three evil-faced men. The men were not redcoats, nor were they farmers, nor yet hunters; indeed they looked like vagabonds more than anything else.

Dick did not hesitate. "Unhand the lady, you scoundrels!" he cried, and then he rushed forward to the attack.

The three obeyed the command with alacrity, somewhat to Dick's surprise, and when he was in reach of them he dealt them severe blows, knocking them down, one after the other.

Dick was somewhat surprised by the ease with which he had overcome the fellows; they had not attempted to defend themselves or strike back.

He had no time to think of this, however, for with a glad cry the girl threw herself into Dick's arms and swooned away, as women sometimes do when their nerves relax after having been overwrought.

Dick was in a quandary. He hardly knew what to do. There were the three desperadoes already scrambling to their feet, and they would undoubtedly attack him. With the insensible girl on his hands he would be badly handicapped and would be unable to defend himself very effectively.

To his surprise, however, when the men got upon their feet they did not attack him at all, but began making complaining remarks.

"Whut did ye hit so hard fur?" asked one.

"Say, thet wuzn't no way ter do!" from another.

"Ye liked ter knocked my head orf!" grumbled the third.

Dick was puzzled by the remarks, which did seem strange under the circumstances. He could see no reason why he should not have hit them hard, and he could not understand why they should stand there and grumble instead of attacking him. He was a quick-witted youth, however, and made up his mind to accept matters as they actually were and ask no questions.

"If they don't wish to attack me, well and good," he said to himself; "that is lucky for me, and now I wonder if I can make use of them?"

Putting on a fierce expression of countenance, he said "One of you bring me some water, quick! Don't you see the lady has fainted?"

"Yas, yas, we see 'et," said one; "I'll bring ye some water."

The fellow ran into the house and returned, quickly with a dipper filled with water. Dick began work at once and after bathing the girl's face for a few moments she gave utterance to a sigh and opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she murmured. "Oh, I remember now!" with a shudder. "Those horrible men were going to carry me away! Where are they now?"

"Guess we'd better be goin', boss," said one of the men in a low voice, in Dick's ear, and the three were starting to slouch away when a man came rushing around the corner of the house, in great excitement.

The newcomer was a British officer, evidently a captain, and as his eyes took in the scene a disappointed and angry look came over his face.

"What has been going on here?" he cried, advancing toward Dick in a threatening manner. "Unhand the lady, you ruffian, or I will run you through!"

"No, no! You must not do anything of the kind, Captain Sheldon!" cried the girl, motioning the officer back. "This young gentleman saved me from those—those ruffians, yonder, who said they were going to carry me away!"

The officer's face grew dark. "He is in with them, I'll warrant!" he cried angrily. "He is one of them, and ought to be cut down in his tracks!"

"Oh, no, he isn't!" the girl cried. "He heard me cry out and came to my rescue."

"From what I have seen and heard since coming here," said Dick, quietly, "it would seem to me that you are the one who is in with those fellows, Captain Sheldon!"

"What's that!" the officer almost shouted. "Do you dare accuse me of any such thing, you peasant dog?"

"I certainly do dare accuse you of it, you redcoat hound!" was the calm retort.

"Oh, gentlemen! gentlemen! don't quarrel!" the girl cried.

As for the three ruffians, they stood and stared from one to the other of the two men, and then at one another, with a blank amazement and wonder.

"I'm kinder afeerd we made er mistake!" whispered one.

The comrade to whom the remark was addressed nodded. "Et looks like et," he replied.

"I thort ther furst wun thet come wuz ther wun we wuz idookin' fur."

"So did I."

When the girl said, "Gentlemen! gentlemen! don't quarrel!" Dick replied, quietly: "I have no desire to quarrel, miss, but I will not stand silent and permit any man to call me names. The captain called me a 'peasant dog,' and I called him a 'redcoat hound,' so we are even, and I am willing to let the matter drop there, if he is."

"But I'm not willing to let the matter drop!" cried the captain. "I repeat what I said a while ago, that you are in collusion with these men, and you dare not deny it!"

Dick paid no attention to the captain just at the moment; instead, he said to the girl: "Are you able to stand without assistance, miss?"

"Oh, yes!" was the reply. "I am sure that I can stand, and walk, too, but you two must not—must not——"

"Never mind, miss," said Dick, gently; "just step aside and oblige me. Perhaps it would be as well for you to go indoors."

The girl gave one quick but expressive look into Dick's eyes and then stepped to one side. She took up her position beside the house, and then she looked from one to the other of the two men, with a frightened expression on her face. There was anxiety there, too, and it was evident that she feared for one or the other of the two men.

Dick now gave his attention to the British officer. "I believe you remarked that I am in collusion with those ruffians, yonder," he said, calmly.

A growl went up from the three, and a frown came over the captain's face, but he nodded and said: "That is just what I did say, and it is the truth, too!"

"It is not the truth!" Dick spoke calmly but decidedly.

"What's that! You dare to tell me I lie?" almost yelled the officer. "Why, you insolent puppy, I will run you through for that, as sure as my name is Sheldon!"

The officer drew his sword and leaped forward. Evi-

dently he meant every word he said, but he was brought to a sudden stop, the youth suddenly whipping out a pistol and leveling it full in the captain's face.

"Stand where you are!" said Dick, sternly. "Keep your distance, for I shall protect myself at all hazards, and have no intention of permitting you to stick that sword in me. Keep back, or I will put a bullet through you!"

The three ruffians looked at one another in amazement. "He's er bad wun, hain't he?" remarked one, in a low voice.

The other two nodded. As for the girl, a good judge of physiognomy would have said at once that she was well pleased with the course affairs had taken. There was a look of pleasure and relief in her eyes and on her face, and she drew a long breath, which was also indicative of relief.

The captain was perhaps the most surprised person of all. And he was angry—phew! His face grew almost black with rage, and his eyes shone with a baleful light as he glared at the youth who had turned the tables on him so completely.

"W-what d-do you m-mean?" the captain stammered. "Drop that pistol!" he added, suddenly and fiercely. Doubtless the thought had come to him that he could overawe and frighten the youth, after all.

But he made a great mistake in this. Dick Slater was a youth who did not know the meaning of the word fear. He merely smiled in a scornful manner, and said: "Drop the pistol, eh?"

"Yes, drop it!"

"And permit you to run your sword through me? I guess that you will have to excuse me, captain!"

A curse escaped the lips of the other. He saw that he could not intimidate the bold youth, and he was determined to get at him and kill him; but how was he to do it? He looked around, and his eyes fell upon the three ruffians. The girl saw the look, and seemed to know what it portended. Quick as a flash she entered the house. At the same instant the captain made a gesture to the three and called out, authoritatively: "Leap upon him and make a prisoner of him, men! Do you hear? Be quick!"

"If they make a move to obey you I will put a bullet through your heart, Captain Sheldon!" said Dick sternly.

"And I will put a bullet through one or two of the ruffians!" cried a clear, ringing voice, and all looked, to see the girl standing in the open doorway with a couple of cocked and leveled pistols in her hands! The pistols were pointed at the three ruffians, and there was a look in

the clear eyes of the girl that said, "Shoot!" as plainly as words could have done.

"Thank you, miss!" said Dick, with a smile. "I guess we will be more than a match for this bold captain and his three unsavory assistants."

"They are not my assistants!" the captain cried, his face black with anger. He looked more like a fiend than a human being, and it was evident that the attitude of the girl was very displeasing to him. Dick, who was a pretty shrewd youth, thought he understood the matter. The captain was in love with the maiden, and did not like to see her take the part of some one else, against him.

"You say they are not your assistants," said Dick, "but it is patent that they are. You have an understanding with them, but I can tell you that it will do you no good, this time; so you might as well go your way."

"I shall not leave this spot till I have had satisfaction out of you!" the captain hissed.

"Why, what have I done to you?"

"You have called me insulting names."

"Well, you called me insulting names first."

"But that is different."

"How is it different?"

"Why, I am an officer in the service of the king, while you are——"

"Just as good a man as any officer who ever served under any king!"

"Bah! what folly to talk in that manner."

"It is the simple truth; so where can there be any folly in that?"

"It is false! You must be an egotist, and a great one!"

"Oh, no; there is nothing egotistical about that. I don't think one would have to be such a very great and good man to be the equal of any British officer—that is, if what I have seen are fair samples, and I think they are."

"How many have you seen?"

"Oh, two or three hundred."

"Bah! I'll warrant you have not seen half a dozen British officers."

"You are entirely mistaken. I have seen more than I wished to see."

"Well, I will tell you what I am going to do," the captain said slowly, and in what he intended should be an impressive manner; "I shall be lowering myself considerably, but as I am desirous of teaching you a lesson, I will make an exception in your case and for once fight one beneath me in station. I challenge you to meet me in a duel, man to man!"

Dick laughed. "Finding that you are beaten at your own game you are going to try another, eh?" he remarked.

"I don't know what you mean," was the snarling reply; "but I will say that one or the other of us shall not leave this place alive—that is, if you have any manhood about you, and are not a coward!"

Again Dick laughed, but this time there was a haughty ring to the laugh that would have warned a close observer that somebody was in danger. "Oh, you needn't be afraid about that part of it, Captain Sheldon," he said, calmly; "I do not fear to meet you in any manner you wish. But I wish to impress one thing upon your mind, and that is that you are not lowering yourself a particle in fighting me. I consider myself the equal of any British officer. I am one who believes that the people of America should be free and independent, and am one who is willing at any times to cross swords with any adherent of the tyrant, King George!"

CHAPTER III.

DICK DOWNS THE CAPTAIN.

"You are a brave and noble-hearted man!" exclaimed the girl, admiration in tone and air.

This, with Dick's words, rendered the captain furious. "What is that!" he almost yelled. "Do you dare call the king a tyrant?"

"I certainly do dare call him a tyrant; and he is a tyrant!" replied Dick.

"That is too much!" fumed the officer. "If you will meet me, say so; and we will get at it at once—and I will kill you, too, you young scoundrel!"

"Perhaps you will; perhaps you won't—you old scoundrel!" was Dick's reply. "I'll meet you. Where shall we fight?"

"Right here!"

"And now?"

"Yes, at once!"

"What weapons shall we use?"

"You, as the challenged party, have the choosing of the weapons."

"Very well; if I had a sword I would meet you with that weapon, but as I haven't I suppose we will have to settle it with pistols at ten paces."

"That suits me. Let us pace off the distance and get to work."

The captain returned his sword to its scabbard and looked about him. His eyes fell upon the three ruffians, who stood where they had been standing all the time. The death was that they were afraid to move for fear the girl would fire upon them.

The captain waved his hand authoritatively and said: "Get away from here! Clear out, you scoundrels! What do you mean by hanging around here, anyway?"

Dark looks appeared on the evil faces of the three, and they growled audibly. "Ther gal'd er put er bullet inter ef we hed tried fur ter go erway," mumbled one.

"I don' think thet's jes' ther way ter tork ter us arter but we done fur ye!" one growled.

"Nur me, neether!" from the other.

"You ought not to address your tools so roughly, captain," said Dick, sarcastically; "see, you have hurt their feelings."

A curse escaped the lips of the officer, and quick as a flash he struck at the smiling face of the youth. "Take that!" he hissed.

But he was dealing with a youth who was a wonder. Dick saw the blow was coming, and ducked; the captain's fist passing above his head. Then, out shot his own fist, and it caught the officer fair between the eyes and stretched him at full length on the grass. It was a terrible stroke, and for a few moments the man lay there, motionless, amazed by the blow and the shock of the fall.

"Served him right!" said the girl, approvingly, and with a smile at Dick.

The three ruffians stared in amazement, and then they shinned and looked at one another. "Ther boss got er waste uv ther young feller's fist, ther same ez we did!" said one.

"Thet's right; an' I don' keer, eether!" from another.

"Nur me—I'm glad uv et!" from the third. "He called us skoun'rels."

The captain lay where he had fallen for nearly half a minute, and then he slowly rose to a sitting posture and looked about him. He felt of his face gingerly, and it was seen that his eyes were rapidly swelling shut. Soon they would be black and blue.

"You should not have struck at me," said Dick quietly. "It proved to be a boomerang."

"Curse you! I'll have your life for this!" the captain rated.

"You will soon have the opportunity to try to take it," was the reply; "just get up and we will step off the ten paces and then we can quickly settle our difficulty."

The captain rose to his feet, but kept feeling of his face

and eyes, and he winked and blinked in a comical fashion. Presently he shook his head.

"I can't go on with this affair now," he said.

"Why not?" in surprise.

"For the reason that I cannot see clearly; my vision is hazy, and I would not have a fair chance with you."

"Oh, that's so; the blow has temporarily injured your sight. Well, we will postpone the affair till some future time, if it is your wish."

"It isn't my wish, but I can't help myself. I have to do so in justice to myself. I don't have any desire to commit suicide."

"Very well; I shall hold myself in readiness to give you full satisfaction at any time or place."

"I will have satisfaction, never fear!" almost hissed the officer. "You have struck me—me, a British officer! That insult can only be atoned for by the shedding of blood!"

"Oh, very well," said Dick; "it is perhaps unnecessary for me to remark that I shall do my best to see to it that it isn't my blood that is shed."

"But it will be your blood that is shed!"

"We will wait and see."

"Your name, if you please," said the captain; "I wish to know who it is that I am to look for."

"My name is Slater, sir—Dick Slater, at your service."

The captain started. "I have heard of you," he said; "you are the captain of a company of rebels known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

"That is correct, sir."

"All right; I am glad to know that you are a soldier. I shall not feel that I have lowered myself in quite such a degree."

"You need not feel that you have lowered yourself at all, captain. I think, without egotism, that you will find me your equal in every respect."

"Bah! but I must be going." The captain turned and strode around the corner of the house, and Dick, who was watching the three ruffians closely, without seeming to do so, saw by the expression on their faces, as they looked in the direction taken by the officer, that he had signaled them to follow.

One of the ruffians said to the girl, in a wheedling voice: "May we go, miss?"

The girl looked inquiringly at Dick, and he nodded. "Let them go," he said.

The girl lowered her pistols. "You may go," she said; "but let me warn you not to come around here again, for I shall be on the watch for you and will shoot you on sight."

You took me by surprise, this time, and I could do nothing; but you will not take me that way again, so beware!"

"We won't come around here again," mumbled one.

"Ye bet we won't!" from another.

"Not ef we knows ourselves, an' we thinks we do!" said the third.

"Very well, then; you may go, and see to it that you don't forget your resolution, and come again."

"Theer hain't no danger thet we'll come erg'in," said one, and the three hastened away.

As Dick expected they would do, they went in the same direction taken by the captain. He stepped to the girl's side and said, quickly: "I am going to follow them. I think they are going to follow the captain; and if I can overhear what they say when they join him I will know whether or not this affair was prearranged, and the men hired by the officer."

"Be careful," said the girl; "they might discover you and turn on you, and four against one is big odds."

"I do not fear them. But are you alone here?"

"Yes."

"Are you afraid to remain here alone while I am gone?"

"No, I am not afraid," was the reply; "but if you don't object, I should like to accompany you and hear with my own ears what the captain says to those ruffians. If I hear him say that they were tools of his, then I will have something against him that will put a stop to his trying to woo me."

"Come, then," said Dick; "we will have to hasten."

He stole to the corner of the house and looked toward the road. He saw the captain riding slowly up the road at a distance of two hundred yards from the house, and the three desperadoes were following him at a distance of one hundred yards.

"Wait till they are out of sight behind that point of timber," said Dick; "then we will hasten, and by cutting across we can overtake them."

They waited, and when the three had disappeared from sight they left their place of concealment and walked as rapidly as possible till they reached the point of timber. Entering this they hastened onward, and had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile when they came in sight of the persons they were following.

The captain had halted and dismounted, and the three ruffians had just joined him. "You see, they have an understanding," said Dick.

"It looks that way," agreed the girl.

"I was sure of it the instant the captain accused me of being in collusion with the three rascals. It is an old

dodge to try to divert suspicion from one's self by accusing some other person."

"So it is."

They hastened onward as rapidly as was possible, and they drew near the point where the four stood, talking, then moved very cautiously. By careful work they managed to get close enough so that they could hear and understand what was said. It did not take long to hear sufficient to make them certain that the captain and the three had been in collusion, for he was berating the ruffians and telling them that they had acted like fools.

"When that young scoundrel put in an appearance, didn't you knock his head off?" the officer was heard to ask.

"We thort et wuz you, cap'n," was the reply.

"Thought it was me?"

"Yas."

"But he didn't have a uniform on."

"We thort et wuz you with yer unyform off."

"But my face—I don't look like him."

"I know, but ye mus' remember, boss, thet et wuz dar in ther cabin las' night, w'en we made ther arrangements with ye, an' we couldn't see yer face good."

"Well, that is true, too; but I should think you would have known the difference."

"But we didn't; an' we wuz mighty mad et ye fur hittin' uv us so hard, boss. We thort thet wuzn't ther squallin' thing."

The captain rubbed his face and eyes. "Curse him! he can hit hard, can't he?" he growled.

"He sartinly can!" was the reply.

"Well, I will get even with him for this day's work. I am not the man to let any one handle me in such a fashion, and then pass it by. I will have his life, just as sure as my name is Sheldon!"

"Waal, I don't keer ef ye do kill ther cuss!" growled one. "He hit me er turrible clip along side ther head, an' it hain't stopped ringin' yit."

"The young scoundrel spoiled my plans," grated the captain; "but for him I should have been enabled to put in an appearance, put you fellows to flight, and then the girl would have hailed me as a hero and the savior of her life. After that I think I should have been able to get her to look with favor on my suit."

Dick gave the girl a look and nod. "You see," he whispered, "it was all prearranged. The captain was going to win your favor by a trick."

"I see," was the whispered reply. "Well, his plan failed, thanks to you!"

"Ther young chap did kinder disarrange yer plans

ore enuff," agreed one of the men. "But what air ye in' ter do now, cap?"

"I don't know; I hardly think it worth while to try at trick again, for I believe the young scoundrel suspected the trick and will likely tell the girl."

"Jes' ez like ez not. Then ye won't want us enny more?"

"Not that I know of. If I should need you, however, will know where to look for you."

"Yas—ther same ole place; ther cabin down by ther ver."

"Yes."

"An' now, boss, I guess we'll take ther res' uv ther munny whut ye owes us."

"The rest of the money that I owe you?" exclaimed the captain.

"Yas."

"But I don't owe you any money."

"Whut's thet! Ye don't mean ter deny et, do ye?" asked the fellow, angrily.

"I don't think that I owe you anything; I paid you money before you did the work."

"But ye on'y paid us ha'f whut ye wuz ter pay. Ther ther ha'f wuz ter be paid w'en ther work wuz done."

"That is it, exactly; the work was not finished. It was rank failure."

"Waal, thet wuzn't our fault; wuz et, boys?"

The other two shook their heads. "Uv course et wuzn't!" they said.

"An' we wants ther res' uv ther munny," the main spokesman said grimly.

The captain was angry and obstinate, however, and held out. "I'm not going to pay for something I didn't get," he said; "if you had held on and knocked the head off that fellow, Dick Slater, then I should have been glad to pay you; but as it is I do not feel that I owe you anything."

"Waal, we feel thet ye owe us sumthin'," was the grim, threatening reply; "an' ef ye don' pay et ye'll go home in worse shape nur ye air at present! We hain't goin' ter stan' no foolishness frum ye, nur ennybuddy. We wants our munny an' we air goin' ter hev et!"

"Curse your impudence! I'll cut you up into ribbons!" roared the captain, and he started to draw his sword. He was not quick enough, however, as the three leaped upon him and bore him to the ground. They began pummeling the officer at a great rate, and he soon set up a cry for quarter.

"Stop! stop!" he howled. "I'll pay! I'll pay! Don't hit me again!"

"Retributive justice!" whispered Dick to the girl.

"Yes, it serves him right," the maiden replied.

The three let the officer up and he drew some gold from his pocket and gave it to them, after which he mounted his horse and rode away, the three men entering the timber and disappearing also.

"Come," said Dick to the girl; "we will go back to the house. I guess we have heard enough to satisfy us that the four were in collusion."

"Yes, indeed," the girl replied; "and if that captain comes bothering around me again I will tell him just what I think of him!"

CHAPTER IV.

DICK HAS FUN WITH THE REDCOATS.

On the way back to the house Dick asked the girl her name.

"Lucy Leslie," was the reply.

"Then you are Judge Leslie's daughter?" the youth queried.

"Yes, Mr. Slater."

"Don't call me 'Mister Slater.' Call me Dick."

"If you will call me Lucy."

"All right, it is a bargain, Lucy."

"So it is, Dick."

"My understanding has been that your father is a strong patriot, and, indeed, that he is a strong personal friend of General Washington, Lucy; how comes it, then, that you have been courted by this British officer?"

"I haven't really been courted by him, Dick."

"You haven't?"

"No; he has simply been a caller at our house three or four times."

"But how did he come to call when your father is a strong patriot?"

"I'll tell you how it is, Dick: You see, father is a patriot, but mother is for the king, and she smiled upon the captain and encouraged him to come."

"Ah, I see; your mother would be willing for you to marry a British officer, then?"

"I think she would."

"But your father would not favor it."

"No, nor do I; for I think as my father does—that the people of America should be free and independent."

"I think you are right, Lucy. But where is your mother?"

"She is away, visiting a neighbor a mile away."

"And your father; where is he?"

"He went to White Plains this forenoon on business."

"Do you think he will be back soon?"

"I think so."

"I hope so; I have a message for him—a letter from General Washington."

"Ah, indeed? I hope father will return before mother, then; for perhaps it might be something father would wish kept secret from her."

"I hope he may return soon as I wish to ride over and visit my mother and sister, this afternoon, before returning to the patriot encampment at North Castle."

"Where do they live, Dick?"

"Near Tarrytown."

"Ah! over by the river?"

"Yes."

"Goodness! I wish they lived close to us. How I should like to have them for neighbors and friends!"

They were almost to the house, now, and they saw a man drive up in a single buggy and turn into the lane leading back to the stable.

"There is father, now!" exclaimed Lucy. "Oh, I'm so glad he has come!"

"And I," said Dick.

They hastened their steps and reached the rear of the house just as the judge got there. Seeing a stranger with Lucy, he stopped.

"Where is your mother, Lucy?" the judge asked.

"She is over at Mrs. Seldon's, father," the girl replied.

"And you have been here alone?"

"Yes, father; and I have had a terrible experience, too, and this young man rendered me a great service. This is Mr. Slater, father, better known as Dick Slater, and he is the captain of the company of young men known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed the judge, climbing out of the buggy and extending his hand. "I've heard of you, Mr. Slater, and I am proud to make your acquaintance!"

"Thank you," said Dick, "I am equally proud to make your acquaintance."

"And now, Lucy, what was the experience you spoke of?" the judge asked, a shade of anxiety on his face.

Lucy told him, in as few words as possible, and when the judge learned of the despicable trick which Captain Sheldon had attempted to play, he was very angry.

"I'll shoot that scoundrel if he ever sets foot on my place again!" he declared.

"No, don't do that, father," said Lucy; "just leave him

to me. I think I can get rid of him for good and all Dick telling him that I know all."

"He will do well to pick a time for his visit when I am not at home!" the judge declared.

"I have a letter for you, sir," said Dick, taking the letter from his pocket.

"A letter for me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who is it from?"

"The commander-in-chief."

"Oh, from General Washington? Good! Give it to me."

The judge took the letter, opened it and read the contents. He nodded his head, when he had finished, and said: "Good! It is all right. I will write a letter in reply and you can take it to the commander-in-chief."

"Very well, sir," said Dick.

"By the way," said the judge, "won't you stay and take supper with us?"

Dick shook his head. "No," he replied, "I will go right back just as soon as you have the letter ready for me."

"Very well; it is as well, for the matter is of importance. I hope, however, that you will visit us some time and stay a while. We owe you considerable, and you should be glad of an opportunity of showing you have appreciated it."

"Yes, indeed!" said Lucy.

"That is all right; no thanks are necessary," said Dick. "I was glad of the opportunity of doing your daughter a favor."

Judge Leslie went into the house and wrote a letter and sealed it. Then he gave it to Dick, who placed it in his pocket, bade the two good-by, and, mounting his horse, started on his return trip.

"I did intend to go over and see the folks, but as the judge said this letter is of importance, I guess I had better go straight back to North Castle and place it in the hands of the commander-in-chief at the earliest possible moment. I can go and see the folks some other time."

As Dick drew near White Plains he asked himself whether he should ride right through the village or go around it. "There might be some redcoats there," he thought, "and then I might get into trouble."

It was already growing dark, however, and he decided to risk going through the village. He did not believe it would attract the attention of any redcoats, should they be there; and even if he did he could give them a race with all the chances in his favor, as Major was a very speedy horse.

Dick soon entered the village and rode eastward, down the main street. Just before he got to where stood an inn, six or seven men came forth and started across the street. They were laughing and talking boisterously, and it was plain that they were at least half drunk. It is equally evident that they were British soldiers, for they were singing snatches of songs which stated that it; then, too, it was not so dark as yet but that their red coats could be seen.

Dick saw that he would be unable to get past in front of the redcoats, so he slackened Major's speed down to a slow walk. This action attracted the attention of the redcoats, who were just ripe for deviltry, anyway, and they paused in the middle of the street.

"Come on! come on!" cried one, addressing Dick. "What you slowing up for?"

"Yes, come on!" cried another. "What are you afraid of?"

Dick didn't like the turn affairs had taken. He had rigged that he would be able to get through the village without being interfered with, but here he had come in contact with six or seven half-drunk redcoats. He could have turned his horse and ridden rapidly away in the opposite direction and made his escape, but that would have entailed considerable loss of time as he would have had to ride much farther, in a roundabout course through the timber; so he made up his mind to face the redcoats and try to get past them without becoming embroiled in a difficulty.

"How are you, gentlemen?" remarked Dick as he drew near. "It is a pleasant evening."

"Oh, yes, a pleasant evening," replied one, mockingly; "a very pleasant evening!"

"Get off your horse and come in and have a drink with us," from another.

"Yes, yes; that's it!" was the cry.

"But I haven't the time to spare, gentlemen," said Dick. "I am in a hurry."

"Oh, no, you are not!" declared one. "It doesn't pay to be in a hurry. Down with you! You must not think you can decline an invitation from members of the king's army in such a fashion. It is not every one we would extend such an invitation to."

"But I assure you I have not the time to spare, gentlemen," Dick protested.

"Bosh! Off with you!"

"Yes, get off or we'll pull you off!"

"Hurry about it, too, for I'm getting deuced thirsty."

"So am I!"

"But, gentlemen," protested Dick, "I don't drink."

There was a burst of boisterous laughter at this. The redcoats seemed to think this about the most amusing thing they had ever heard.

"You don't drink?"

"Say, you don't mean it?"

"You are a wonderful fellow!"

"That makes it all the better. This will be a good time to begin—eh, fellows?"

"Yes, yes! It will be sport to see him taking his dose for the first time!"

Dick saw he was in for trouble and made up his mind to get in the first blow. In most encounters this counts for a good deal. In fact, it usually is sufficient to win the battle. Dick was well aware of this, so he suddenly gave Major a signal and the intelligent animal leaped forward and began rearing and plunging and whirling and kicking at a great rate.

"Look out! I can't hold him!" cried Dick, simulating accents of terror. "Get out of the way or he may kill some of you! Look out!"

The redcoats hastened to obey. They were not so drunk but that the instinct of self-preservation was strong within them and the way they scrambled and fell over one another in their efforts to get quickly out of the way of the seemingly maddened animal was comical to see.

The street was soon clear and Dick gave Major the signal to stop cutting capers, and a moment later the intelligent animal was galloping up the street.

The redcoats, as soon as the danger was past, scrambled to their feet and yelled for Dick to stop.

"Come back here!" they howled. "Come back, I say!"

But, of course, Dick paid no attention to them, and seeing this the redcoats become angry.

"I believe that was a trick!" cried one.

"You are right," from another; "that fellow made the horse do that kicking and plunging!"

"Of course he did!"

"Say, I'll wager that fellow is a rebel!"

"Do you think so?"

"I would wager any amount that he is!"

"Then let's go after him!"

"I'm in for it!"

"And I!"

"And I!"

The redcoats, now somewhat sobered, rushed across the street to where their horses were tied, and, untying them, leaped into the saddles and dashed down the street in pursuit of Dick.

The youth looked back and saw them coming. "So you are going to give chase, are you?" he murmured. "All right; and if you can catch Major you are welcome to make a prisoner of me!"

The redcoats had good horses, but they were not so good as Dick's animal, which was a thoroughbred, with the best Arabian blood in his veins. Major was a wonderfully speedy horse, and had great staying qualities as well. Dick had never yet seen the equal of Major, and did not have any fears that the redcoats would overtake him. He was not averse to having a little sport, however, so he held his horse in, and did not let him go at anywhere near his best speed. This permitted the pursuers to draw nearer, and as soon as they noted the fact that they were drawing up on the fugitive they began giving utterance to exultant yells.

"They think they will catch me," thought Dick; "well, I will wait a little and then give them an unpleasant surprise."

Onward he rode at the same gait, and presently the redcoats were within seventy-five yards of him.

"Stop!" yelled one. "Stop, or we will fire upon you!"

"Yes, you can't get away so might as well give up first as last!" from another.

"Stop and surrender, you rebel!" from a third.

"Oh, you think you have me, do you?" called out Dick.

"Of course! You can see that yourself!"

"But I don't see it."

"You are a fool!"

"No, you fellows are the fools!"

"Bah! we'll make you wish you had not talked so saucy!"

"I'll prove to you that you are the fools!"

"How will you do it?"

"By running away from you. Watch me!"

Dick loosened the reins and gave a chirp, and Major shot forward, like an arrow from a bow. He left the horses of the redcoats behind with such rapidity that they seemed almost as if standing still.

The redcoats saw that the fugitive had simply been playing with them, and they gave utterance to yells of anger and disgust; they lashed their horses, but could not get any more speed out of them and were soon forced to give up the chase as the person they were pursuing had disappeared in the darkness ahead of them. They rode back to the village in disgusted silence, and, dismounting, entered a tavern and proceeded to drown their disappointment and discomfiture in drink.

A little more than an hour later Dick reached the patriot

encampment at North Castle, and delivered Judge Lesliot's letter into the hands of the commander-in-chief.

CHAPTER V.

JOE SCROGGS AND HIS BAND AT WORK.

As Dick had thought, he had wounded Joe Scroggs with one of the bullets he had fired into the timber after the "Terrible Twenty" had been scattered and put to flight by Major. Joe was not much hurt, however, he having received only a flesh wound, and a slight one at that, but he had thought that he had received his death wound and howled dismally. When he found that he could run with as much strength as ever, however, his courage returned, and he made up his mind that he was all right, after all.

When they had penetrated to the distance of a quarter of a mile they paused and Joe looked to see how badly hurt he was. He found that he had received a mere scratch, and then his fear was changed to anger.

"I'll kill that Dick Slater yit!" he cried. "I'll show 'im thet he kain't han'le me in this heer fashion an' no git hurt himself!"

"He's er bad wun, though, I tell ye!" said one of the youths.

"Yas; but ef we git er chance we'll be able ter talk 'um uv ther badness outer 'im!"

"But how air we goin' ter git ther chance?"

"I dunno; but we'll git et, all right."

"Waal, I hain't so shore uv et. He hez er hunder fellers, wile we hev on'y twenty; an' whut chance wou'd we stan' erg'inst him an' his crowd?"

"I'll tell ye whut we'll do," said Joe.

"Whut?"

"We'll git up er ban' with ez menny in et ez Dick Slater hez in his'n, an' then we'll be able ter giv' 'em er good fight."

"But kin we git thet menny boys?"

"I think we kin. Theer's thet menny aroun', I'm shore."

"I sh'd think theer would be."

"Yas; I'm shore theer is."

"When'll ye git 'em tergeth'er, Joe?"

"Right erway. I want'er be red'dy fur Dick Slater an' his gang uv 'Liberty Boys' ther nex' time we run er cross enny uv 'em."

The other members of the band were in for this, and they made their way to a cabin in the timber, in a secluded

slipshot, where few people ever went. This was the headquarters of the band, and the members began laying their plans at once.

"Theer's anuther thing erbout hevin' er hunderd boys," said Joe; "we will be able ter go aroun' ter ther houses uv er Whigs an' do jes' ez we please with ther folks. Ef they try ter keep us erway we kin kill 'em; an' we kin burn ther houses an' take ennythin' thet we fin' in ther houses."

"Yas, ther more boys we hev, ther better," said another. "Yas, twenty uv us hain't ernuff."

Joe went about the work in a business-like way. He named eight youths and sent them out in as many different directions, with instructions to be sure and miss no Tory home and to get as many youths as they possibly could. Quite a number of new recruits were secured that night, and it took all next day and the next night to secure the hundred that Joe had set his heart on having.

The number was secured and Joe was happy. He imagined that they would be able to thrash the "Liberty Boys" easily, if they should be so fortunate as to meet those rebels." He did not take into consideration the fact that the "Liberty Boys" were regular soldiers and that they had had experience in actual warfare; that they were rapidly becoming veterans.

"We air all right now, fellers," he said; "we hev men enuff so thet we kin do jes' erbout ez we please. We will go ter work right erway an' we'll make ther Whigs an' rebels wish they wuz on ther side uv ther king!"

"Thet's whut we'll do!" was the cry.

"Whut air ye goin' ter do furst, Joe?" asked one.

"I'll tell ye whut I think uv doin'," was the reply; "ye know, we went ter ther homes uv Dick Slater an' Bob Estabrook, wunst, an' burnt er stable an' set fire ter ther house, but they wuz too much fur us an' we hed ter git erway an' ther house wuzn't burnt, arter all."

"Yas, we know thet."

"Waal, I think ther furst thing we'll do will be ter go an' finish up thet their job."

"All right; we're willin'."

"Let's go this very night."

"All right."

Joe ordered the youths to get ready to travel, and they were soon ready. The force set out through the timber and walked steadily for an hour. They were then near the crossroad of Dick Slater's mother and sister.

The youths continued onward until they reached the farmhouse, which they at once surrounded. This done, Joe went and knocked on the door. It was opened by a girl

of about seventeen years. This was Edith Slater, Dick's sister, and she was a remarkably pretty girl.

"Hello, Edith," said Joe, who felt that there was no need of his wasting any politeness.

"Joe Scroggs!" exclaimed Edith, in a tone of dismay.

"Yas, et's Joe Scroggs!" with a grin of satisfaction. "Air ye glad ter see me, Edith?"

"Glad to see you? No; I hate the sight of you, Joe Scroggs!"

"Oh, ye do?"

"Yes, I do."

"Who is it, Edith?" came from within, in a woman's voice.

"It is Joe Scroggs, mother," was the reply.

"Joe Scroggs!" in a tone of alarm.

"Yas, Joe Scroggs, an' er hunderd more fellers, Mrs. Slater!" called out Joe. "We hev come ter finish ther work we wuz goin' ter do ther other time we wuz heer, an' this time we're goin' ter do et, too!"

"You coward!" said Edith, with spirit.

"Oh, call me names ef ye wanten," grinned Joe. "I don' keer, not er cent's worth. I'll git even with ye fur et."

"Don't anger him, Edith," said Mrs. Slater, appearing in the doorway.

"I couldn't help saying it, mother," was the reply.

"Surely you don't mean what you say, Joe," said Mrs. Slater. "You are not going to burn our house?"

"Waal, we jest air!" was the reply.

"What good will it do you to turn us out in the world without a roof over our heads?"

"Oh, et'll do me er lot uv good. I hev er grudge erg'in' Dick, an' I kin pay et this way."

"What has Dick ever done to you?"

"Waal, jest ther other day he shot me in ther thigh."

"Dick shot you?" in astonishment.

"Yas."

"Where did you see him?"

"Over not fur from White Plains."

"What was he doing there, I wonder?"

"I dunno."

"Was he alone?"

"Yas."

"Where did the meeting take place?"

"Erbout two miles south uv White Plains."

"Were you alone when you met him?"

"No; theer wuz fifteen er twenty uv ther boys erlong."

"And you say he shot you?"

"Yas."

"Surely you gave him provocation."

"Whut's thet?"

"You must have done something to him first or he would not have shot you."

Joe shook his head. "No, we wuzn't erdoin' nuthin' ter 'im, on'y torkin' ter 'im," he said; "an' all uv er sudden he made his hoss go ter kickin' an' r'arin' aroun', an' knocked down sum uv our fellers an' hurt 'em purty bad. Then we pulled out our pistils an' fired at 'im ez he wuz ridin' erway, an' he whirled aroun' an' rode back an' fired at us twicet. Wun uv ther bullets hit me in ther thigh."

Mrs. Slater shook her head. "I can't believe that Dick would take the initiative in bringing about hostilities," she said; "you must have threatened him or done something, or he would not have made his horse kick and plunge around. And, then, when you fired upon him, of course he was justified in returning the fire."

"I don' see et thet way," growled Joe; "I don' think he hed enny bizness doin' ther way he did, an' I'm goin' ter git even with him by burnin' yer house down!"

"You must not do it, Joe!"

"Oh, but I mus'; an' now ye hed better come outer ther house. We don' keer erbout burnin' ye up."

"Oh, if Dick were only here!" sighed Mrs. Slater.

"Whut c'u'd he do erg'inst er hunderd uv us?" sneered Joe.

"Not much, unaided; but if he were here with his brave 'Liberty Boys,' I think he could do considerable."

"Bah! we c'u'd lick him an' all his 'Liberty Boys!'"

"It is easy to boast," said Edith, "but if they were here you wouldn't talk that way."

"Ye'd see!"

"Of course we would. We'd see that you were a big coward!"

"Hush, Edith!" cautioned her mother.

"Oh, thet's all right; let 'er tork," said Joe.

"He knows what I said is the truth," said Edith.

"Et hain't so!" declared Joe. Then he added: "Come outer ther house, now, both uv ye, fur we air goin' ter set ther house on fire right erway!"

"You must not do that, Joe!" said Mrs. Slater. "Remember, I am a widow, and it will be wicked, very wicked, to rob me of my home."

"So's my mother er widder," said Joe, harshly. "An' yer son Dick made her er widder, too, ez ye well know! He killed my dad!"

A sad look came over the face of Mrs. Slater, as she replied, in a reproachful tone: "Yes, Joe, but he had

provocation. You know that your father had just shEd down Dick's father, my husband."

"I dunno nothin' erbout et."

"Yes, you do, but you are unwilling to acknowledge iacc

"Waal, we've hed ernuff tork; now ye two git outer th house ter wunst, ef ye don' wanter git scorched!" an'

"If you burn my house you will be sorry for it, Joe" said Mrs. Slater, who had considerable spirit.

"W'y so?"

"Because if you burn my house Dick will not rest unbu he has settled with you for it!"

"Bah!" sneered Joe. "I hain't erfeerd uv Dick Slater nur ennybuddy else!"

"You may not think so at the present moment, but whbu you find yourself face to face with him I think you wder change your mind."

"Not er bit uv et! Jes' come outer ther house, nojus Bill, set ther house on fire!"

One of the youths began gathering up some dry graSe and small bits of wood, and piling all against the side of the house. There was no doubt of the fact that Joe iTt tended to burn the house. Mrs. Slater and Edith realizqu this, and running back into the house they hastily gatheren up some of their most prized articles and then came forth from the house.

"Thet's sensible," said Joe; then to his comrade lea called out: "How erbout et, Bill? Got ernuff stuff theki fur ter set fire to?"

"Purty near enuff, I guess, Joe," was the reply.

"Waal, set fire ter et ez soon ez ye hev ernuff."

"All right."

A couple of minutes later the youth in question got othe flint and steel and began the work of starting the fir It did not take him long, and soon there was a small blaB going.

The blaze steadily grew and was watched by more tha one hundred pairs of eyes. The members of Joe's forc watched it with satisfaction, while Mrs. Slater and Edit gazed at the blaze with their hearts in their throats an deep sorrow in their hearts. Were they to lose their hom now? Was their house to be burned down? It looked ver much as if such was to be the case.

"Please, Joe, put the fire out!" pleaded Mrs. Slater "Don't burn my house."

But Joe only laughed coarsely. "Ye needn't beg mab not ter do et, Mrs. Slater," he said; "I hate yer son Dic an' by doin' uv this I'll be gittin' kinder squared up wit 'im."

"You will not be successful in staying that way," sai

Edith; "as soon as Dick learns that you have done this he will make it his business to settle with you, and by the time he gets through with you, you will have a bigger account against him than you have now."

"I'm not erfereed!" said Joe; "I wish thet Dick Slater an' his 'Liberty Boys' wuz heer now; we'd giv' 'em ther worst lickin' they ever hed in all theer lives!"

The blaze had grown till now it was beginning to take hold on the house, and it would not be long before the building would be in flames.

Suddenly, as all stood there watching the flames, there came the sound of hoofbeats. It was not the noise such as would be made by one, two or even a half dozen horses, but it was the thunder of hundreds of hoofs. It was evident that a large force was coming, and at top speed, too.

"It's Dick and the 'Liberty Boys'!" cried Edith. "I ov just know it is Dick and the 'Liberty Boys'!"

The girl's words had an almost electrical effect on Joe Scroggs and his comrades. Joe gave utterance to a cry of dismay, and fled around the house at his best speed. The others, having an example set them by their leader, quickly followed suit, and in an instant, seemingly, the entire force had disappeared around the house and into the darkness.

The newcomers came to a stop in front of the yard, and leaping off their horses ran forward and several of them kicked the blazing sticks away from the house and smothered out the flame that was beginning to eat into the weather-boards of the building.

"Oh, Dick, my son—my darling son, you are just in time!" cried Mrs. Slater, seizing one of the newcomers in her arms and hugging and kissing him.

The newcomers were indeed Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys," and, as Mrs. Slater said, they had got there just in time.

CHAPTER VI.

ALICE IS JEALOUS.

"Who were those scoundrels, mother?" asked Dick.

"They were Joe Scroggs and a band of young fellows about like himself, Dick."

"How many of them were there?"

"Oh, there must be at least a hundred of them, Dick," said Edith.

"And they went around the house?"

"Yes."

"Come, boys," called out Dick; "let's see if we can get sight of the scoundrels."

He led the way, and all rushed around the house and to the edge of the timber back of the house, but saw nothing of Joe and his gang. They had made good time and had disappeared. Knowing that it would be useless to attempt to follow, Dick told his men to come along, and they went back to the house.

"We could see nothing of them," he told his mother and Edith; "I guess they have gone for good."

"I wonder what Joe thinks about it now, mother?" laughed Edith. "He was bragging that he wasn't afraid of you and your 'Liberty Boys,' Dick," she explained; "and he even said that he wished you were here—and then the instant he became convinced that you were coming he broke and fled at his best speed."

"Joe is a great coward," said Dick; "and you say he has a hundred youths with him?"

"That is what he said; and we could see that there were a large number. I think there were at least one hundred of them."

"Then I think I had better leave twenty-five or thirty of my men here to protect you, mother," said Dick; "those rascals might come back."

"Leave some of your men, did you say, Dick?"

"Yes, mother."

"Can't you all stay?"

"No; we are out on special duty to-night, mother, and must go on; but I can spare twenty-five to thirty of my boys."

"Very well; but when will you be back, Dick?"

"If we have good luck we will be back here in the morning."

"Very well; we will have some breakfast ready for you."

"You had better stay up all night to do the cooking, then," with a laugh; "there are a hundred of us, you know, and we do have the most wonderful appetites!"

"Don't you worry, Dick," laughed Edith; "we'll have enough for all. We'll send over and have Mrs. Estabrook and Alice do some cooking, too, you know."

"That's right," said Bob, approvingly; "it wouldn't be fair for you and your mother to do all the work, Edith."

"Say, Bob, I guess I will leave you here in charge of the force," said Dick, with a sly wink; "unless, indeed, you would prefer not to stay."

"Oh, you old rascal!" laughed Bob. "You know I want to stay, all right!"

And indeed this was the case. Dick did know it. Bob

Estabrook and Edith Slater were sweethearts, and, of course, Bob would be glad to stay where his sweetheart was and be at hand to protect her in case the Tory youths should return.

Dick named twenty-five of the youths and told them to remain there and be under Bob's command. "Keep a guard out in all directions, Bob," he said; "don't let the rascals take you by surprise."

"I won't let them do that, you may be sure, Dick," was the confident reply; "and if they dare venture back here I will make them wish they hadn't, that's all!"

After some further instructions Dick bade his mother and sister good-by, and, with his force, mounted and rode away toward the south.

As soon as they were gone Bob stationed six of the youths to keep guard. "If any of those fellows put in an appearance, shoot them!" he said, and the youths said they would. The nineteen youths were given the large, front room in which to lie on their blankets, spread on the floor, and sleep.

As for Bob, he did not lie down for two hours, at least, as he sat in the kitchen with Edith and had a great deal to talk about. What they talked about would not interest the reader, so we will not put it down on paper.

The guards were changed every three hours throughout the night, and although a sharp lookout had been maintained, no signs of the Tory youths had been seen. Joe Scroggs and his band had doubtless concluded that prudence was the better part of valor, and had taken themselves off.

Mrs. Slater and Edith were up very early, and Bob went over and woke up his folks. They were surprised to see Bob, as they had not known a thing about the trouble over at the Slater home. They had gone to bed rather early, and had not heard or seen anything to apprise them of what was going on. They were glad to see Bob, of course, and Mrs. Estabrook and Alice got up and went to work, cooking, as Mrs. Slater and Edith were doing.

"And so Joe Scroggs and a gang of youths came and were going to burn Mrs. Slater's house, Bob?" exclaimed Mr. Estabrook, when he had finished dressing and put in an appearance.

"Yes, father; and they would have done the work, too, if we hadn't put in an appearance just when we did. The house was already on fire."

"The scoundrels! And I more than half suspect that they would have burned my house, too."

"Quite likely, father; for you know they are well aware

of the fact that I am a member of the company of 'Liberty Boys.' "

"Yes, they know that. Well, I'm glad you got there in time to put them to flight."

"So am I."

"You say Dick and the rest of the 'Liberty Boys' will be back this morning?"

"Yes; we expect them at any moment."

It was an hour before the "Liberty Boys" arrived, however, and they were tired and hungry, for they had had a long, hard ride. Fifty of them stopped at the Estabrook home, while the remaining twenty-five went on over to Dick's home. Dick went into the kitchen to greet Alice, who was his sweetheart, but was greeted coldly by the beautiful girl. Instead of leaping into his arms and giving him a hug and more kisses than one, as she usually did, Alice kept away and had no smile for the youth.

"Why, what is the matter, Alice?" asked Dick, in surprise, a hurt look on his face. "What makes you treat me in this fashion?"

"You know, very well," was the cold reply.

"I know?"

"Yes."

"Indeed I do not, Alice!"

"Don't call me Alice!" stamping her foot and looking at Dick with flashing eyes.

Dick hardly knew what to think or say. "Why shouldn't I call you Alice?" he asked.

"Because you can't call me by my given name and make love to another girl at the same time—that's why!"

Dick started, and a glimmering of the truth came to him. Alice was jealous! He would not have believed it possible; but such seemed to be the case. There could be no other explanation of her strange talk and actions.

"What do you mean, Alice?" exclaimed Dick. "I haven't been making love to any other girl."

Alice looked at the youth searchingly and eagerly, too. It was plain that she would have liked to believe what Dick said, but she shook her head. "I am afraid that you are telling me a story, Dick," she said. "What about Lucy Leslie?"

Dick started. "Lucy Leslie?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; you know who I mean—Judge Leslie's daughter who lives over south of White Plains."

"I know who you mean, but I haven't made love to Lucy Leslie."

"Are you sure you haven't, Dick?"

"Of course I'm sure I haven't. Who has been telling you any such foolish stories, Alice?"

"Amy Thornton, who lives a mile from Judge Leslie's, was here yesterday and she told me that you had saved Lucy from being carried away by some horrid men, and that you had fought a British captain for Lucy's sake, and that there was no doubt that you were in love with her."

"Oh, so this Miss Amy told you all that, did she?" remarked Dick somewhat ironically.

"Yes."

"Well, part of it is true; I had a message to carry from the commander-in-chief to Judge Leslie the other day, and when I got to his home I was so fortunate as to be just in time to frighten some fellows who were going to carry Miss Lucy away—that is to say, I thought they were going to do so, but it turned out that it was all a pre-arranged affair, and that a British captain, Sheldon by name, who has been paying suit to Lucy, but was not encouraged, was to put in an appearance, knock them right and left and ostensibly save the girl and thus win her gratitude in the hope that he might later win her hand; but I got there just in time to spoil the game, for I knocked the fellows right and left; and when the captain got there he was a little bit too late."

"I know," said Alice; "Amy told me all that, and she told me that she thinks Lucy Leslie fell in love with you, and——"

"I hope that such is not the case, Alice," said Dick gravely, "for I would not wish to be the means of causing my girl sorrow."

Alice's face lighted up. "Then you—then you don't—don't care for—for this girl, Dick?" she stammered. There was a look of joy in her eyes, a tremor in her voice, and Dick leaped forward and seized the beautiful girl in his arms.

"Of course I don't care for her, Alice," he said; "how could I when you have my heart, my own little sweetheart?" and Dick gave her a hug and a kiss.

"Oh, Dick!" breathed the girl, and then she threw her arms about his neck, and placing her face against his shoulder wept as if—so it seemed to Dick—her heart were broken.

"There, there—don't cry, little sweetheart!" said Dick, "don't cry! You know I love you, and you only, Alice, so dry your tears and smile for me."

"I—I'm cry-crying for—for joy, Dick!" the girl said, in broken accents.

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, Alice," the youth said; "but if it is all the same to you I would rather that you should laugh for joy."

It was with Dick as it is with most men; he could not

understand how one could cry for joy as well as he could understand their laughing for joy. But there was no doubt that Alice was doing just what she said—crying for joy, for she nestled close to the youth and gave kiss for kiss.

"Oh, I'm so—so happy, Dick!" she murmured; "and I have been—have been so—so miserable!"

"All over nothing at all, Alice," reproachfully.

"Well, Amy told those—those terrible things in such a real manner that I—that I couldn't hardly help believing it."

"But you should have known better than to do so, little sweetheart," said Dick; "how could I care for any other girl, after having known you, Alice? You, who are the prettiest, the sweetest and best little girl in all the world!"

"Oh, Dick, do you—do you really mean it?"

"Mean it? Well, I should say I do mean it! And don't you ever doubt me again, little sweetheart!"

"I never will, Dick!"

"That's right; that's the way to talk."

Mrs. Estabrook entered, just then, and she smiled and nodded her head approvingly as she saw how matters stood. "Oh, mother, that which Amy Thornton told me was only surmise on her part, after all!" cried Alice, her face radiant.

"Didn't I tell you so, Alice?" her mother replied. "I knew it could not be otherwise."

"I would indeed be hard to please if I wasn't satisfied with Alice, Mrs. Estabrook," said Dick, with a smile.

"He's flattering me now, mother!" said the girl, but she blushed and looked pleased, just the same.

"There is nothing of flattery about it," denied Dick; "I mean every word."

After some further conversation Dick took his departure, going over to his mother's house, where he ate breakfast with the fifty youths who were there.

When breakfast was over he called Bob Estabrook to one side and said: "Bob, this is the second time Joe Scroggs and his gang has tried to burn my mother's house, and I am getting tired of it."

"I don't blame you, Dick."

"And I'm afraid, Bob, that the third time they will make a success of it."

"It is likely that they would."

"Exactly; and I have made up my mind to go over to Mrs. Scroggs', and, if Joe is there, have a talk with him."

"That's a good idea."

"I think so; I will go over there and talk straight to him. He has got to let my folks and yours alone, Bob,

and I think that I can make such an impression upon him as will cause him to do so."

"It's worth trying, anyway."

"That's what I think; and I will go over there right away."

"Hadn't I better go along?"

"No; I'll go alone."

"But he may have some of his gang there."

"I don't think so. They probably have a rendezvous somewhere in the depths of the timber."

"Then we will remain here till you come back?"

"Yes; I won't be gone more than an hour."

Dick set out, and after a walk of twenty minutes reached the clearing in which was the Scroggs home, and approached the house.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" TEACH THE TORY YOUTHS A LESSON.

It happened that the door was open, and as he reached the door Dick looked into the room and saw Joe Scroggs and his mother sitting at the table, eating breakfast. They heard Dick's footsteps and looked out and saw who the visitor was. There was a look of surprise on the face of Mrs. Scroggs, but a look of terror suddenly came over Joe's face, and he leaped to his feet with an inarticulate cry, and stood staring at Dick. He was trembling and seemed on the point of falling, while his face grew the color of ashes.

"Et's—Dick—Slater!" he gasped.

"Yes, it is I, Dick Slater," said the youth; "come outside, Joe, I want to have a little talk with you."

Mrs. Scroggs took alarm at once. She knew that Joe was not as good a boy as he ought to be, but she loved him, just the same, as mothers will, and she cried: "W-whut hez Joe be'n a-doin', Dick?"

Dick felt sorry for the poor woman, and so answered, reassuringly: "Oh, nothing in particular, Mrs. Scroggs. I just wish to see him on a small matter of business, that is all. Come outside, Joe."

Joe was badly frightened, but he came stumblingly forth, and walked away from the house with Dick, who led the way around to a spot that was out of sight of the house, as he did not wish Mrs. Scroggs to see them talking, he intending to talk to Joe sternly and impressively.

Presently Dick paused and faced his companion. "Joe,"

he said sternly, "I have come here to have a talk with you and to come to an understanding with you."

"All right; go erhead," mumbled Joe.

"Very well; now, last night, Joe, you, with a band of youths like yourself, appeared at the home of my mother and set fire to the house. But for the timely arrival of myself and 'Liberty Boys' you would have burned the house to the ground."

Joe knew there was no use denying it, so he said nothing. He looked down and kicked his toe into the loose dirt.

"That is the second time you have tried to do that, Joe," went on Dick; "and now I am here to-day to tell you not to make a third attempt."

"Who sed I would make er third attempt?" asked Joe.

"No one; but I judged that you would, so I made up my mind to come here and have a talk with you. Now, I will say, Joe, that I cannot always be in this part of the country to protect my folks, and I am going to make it safe for them when I am gone by making you understand that you will not be safe for you to try any more such work as you have been doing, whether I am in this vicinity or not."

"How air ye goin' ter do et?" There was the least tinge of insolence in the youth's tone, and it made Dick angry.

"I'll tell you how I am going to do it, Joe Scroggs," he said fiercely; "by impressing upon your mind the fact that if you do any damage to my mother's property or bother her again in any way, I will come here and hunt you down and shoot you as I would a mad dog! Do you understand?"

Evidently Joe did, for he turned pale and trembled. There was something terrifying in Dick's tone and look, and Joe, who was craven-hearted at the best, was awed by it.

"Yas, I unnerstan'," he mumbled.

"It is well that you do; and let me tell you, Joe Scroggs, that if you know when you are well off you will not bother my mother or the Estabrooks in any way, at any time in the future. If you do I shall hunt you down and kill you no matter if you were surrounded by a thousand companions instead of only a hundred! Don't think for an instant that they will be any protection to you, for they won't."

"I hain't got no idee uv doin' ennythin' more," said Joe sullenly.

"Well, if you have you had better dismiss it from your mind!"

"I tell ye, I hain't thinkin' uv tryin' ennythin' more. I ye say, I've tried twicet ter burn yer mother's house."

failed, an' I hev made up my min' thet et hain't intended
thet I'm ter do et."

"All right; I'm glad to hear you say so, for I don't
really wish to be forced to kill you."

This was said in such a calm, matter-of-fact manner that
Joe shuddered. He knew Dick Slater well, had known him
all his life, and he knew the young "Liberty Boy" was a
youth of his word.

"Is theer ennythin' else ye want ter say ter me?" asked
Joe.

"Only this, Joe: That you had better disband your band
of youths and quit your work of annoying the patriot
people of this neighborhood. You are going to get into
trouble sooner or later if you keep on, and I tell you
frankly that if I run across you with my 'Liberty Boys'
we will treat you just as we would treat a body of redcoats,
and that would be bad for you."

"I guess we kin take keer uv ourselves," said Joe sulkily.

"Well, be careful; if you know when you are well off
you will disband."

"Is thet all ye hev ter say ter me?"

"Yes, for the present. If you don't conduct yourself
right I may hunt you up again—and if I do you will need
to look out for yourself!"

Joe shivered, and then both turned and walked toward
the house. "Remember what I have said!" said Dick, in
a low, threatening voice as he parted from the other, near
the house, and then he continued on his way, while Joe
entered the house.

"Whut ye be'n a-doin', Joe?" asked his mother anxiously
as Joe entered.

"Nothin'," he answered sullenly.

"I know better," his mother insisted; "Dick Slater
wouldn't hev come over heer ter see ye fur nothin', an'
ez I know he hain't er frien' uv your'n, I know ye mus'
ggev be'n doin' sumthin' he didn' like."

"No, I hain't be'n doin' nothin'," the youth declared,
and when his mother kept insisting that he had, he finally
got mad and left the house. Mrs. Scroggs burst into tears
and shook her head sadly as she murmured: "I'm erfraid
Joe's ergoin' ter git himself inter some orful trubble ef he
hain't keerful!"

Dick hastened back to his home and told Bob the result
of his visit to the Scroggs home. Bob listened with in-
terest.

"Do you think Joe will let our folks alone from now on,
Dick?" he asked.

"I don't know, Bob; but I think he will."

"Well, if he doesn't we'll make it warm for him!"

"Yes, indeed."

Dick now gave the order for the "Liberty Boys" to get
ready to start for North Castle, and while they were doing
so, and Bob was giving Edith some farewell kisses, Dick
went over to the Estabrook home and did the same with
Alice.

"Now, little sweetheart, I want you to promise me one
thing," said Dick earnestly.

"What is it, Dick?"

"That you will never doubt me again. Do you promise?"

"Yes, Dick."

"That's a good girl. Goodness, Alice! keep a looking-
glass handy and take a look in it once in a while; then you
will see how impossible it would be for me to care for
any one else when I know I have your love!"

"Oh, Dick!" The beautiful girl twined her arms about
his neck and nestled close up to him.

A few more kisses, a whispered "good-by, little sweet-
heart," and Dick was away. Returning to his home he
mounted his horse and set out at the head of his company
of "Liberty Boys."

They had gone only a short distance when Dick called a
halt. "It is possible that Joe Scroggs and his gang might
ambush us," he said; "and so I have made up my mind
to send some scouts ahead. We must not take any chances."

"That's right," agreed Bob. "Send about four scouts
ahead, two for each side of the road."

This Dick did, and the party moved forward slowly; it
was rather irksome, but was better than to go faster and
run into ambush and lose some of his men.

They had gone about a mile when one of the scouts put
in an appearance and told Dick that the Tory youths were
indeed waiting in ambush half a mile up the road.

Dick nodded. "I suspected as much," he said; "and I
guess we will have to teach them a lesson, eh, fellows?"

The youths nodded their heads vigorously in assent. It
was evident that they were ready to teach the Tory youths
a lesson.

"There is one thing," said Dick; "I don't wish to kill
any of the Tory boys. They are all boys whom I have
known all my life. What I want to do is to discourage
them and cause them to disband, and it is my opinion that
this can be done without killing any of them."

"How, Dick?" asked Bob.

"By wounding them."

"Ah, I understand."

"We will dismount, slip down upon them," said Dick;
"and when close enough we will give utterance to some
yells which will have the effect of causing them to leap

to their feet. Then we will open fire upon them, but each and every one must be careful and fire low. Aim at their legs."

All nodded, to signify that they understood, and Bob said: "That's a good scheme, Dick. We will make a lot of them walk lame for some time to come!"

"That is what we will do, Bob, and I think it will be quite as effective as killing them."

"I think so, too."

The youths dismounted, and leaving five of their number to look after the horses, they moved forward, through the timber, keeping perhaps a hundred yards from the road. The scout who had discovered the whereabouts of the Tory youths led the way, and presently he gave the signal for the exercise of caution in advancing.

All made their way along in silence; they were good woodsmen, and could move with as little noise as the Indians would have made. Presently the guide gave the signal for them to stop, and they obeyed.

"We are within musket-shot distance of them," he whispered to Dick; "yonder—don't you see some of them hiding behind the trees?"

Dick nodded. "I see them," he said; "and I think we will be able to give them a lesson that will last them for quite a while." He looked around and saw that all the "Liberty Boys" were in readiness, and then he gave a signal. It was the signal that had been agreed upon, and the instant he made the signal the youths gave utterance to a chorus of yells that were enough to startle any one who was not expecting anything of the kind.

The Tory youths were not expecting it, and they leaped to their feet with wild yells of fright, and gazed wildly and excitedly around.

At this instant the "Liberty Boys" charged forward, giving utterance to their battle cry of "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!"

The Tory youths saw the "Liberty Boys" now, and turned to flee. They had expected to take the enemy by surprise, and fire upon it from ambush, and to have the tables turned was demoralizing in the extreme. Dick saw the time had come and he gave the command to fire.

Instantly the youths paused, leveled their muskets and fired a volley. In accordance with the instructions given them by Dick, they aimed low and although a dozen or more of the fleeing youths were brought down, not one was killed. Each and every one was wounded in the leg.

"After them!" cried Dick. "After them, and give them a volley from your pistols!"

A cheer went up from the "Liberty Boys," and they

gave chase to the fleeing youths, running with all their might, for they wished to wound some more and do their work up in good style."

The Tory youths were so badly frightened that they ran at wonderful speed, however, and seeing they could not gain on the fugitives, Dick gave the order to fire. The youths drew their pistols, paused, and, taking quick aim, fired.

Of course, the pistols could not be expected to do nearly so much damage as the muskets, but five of the fugitives were brought down. Dick then called a halt. "It would be folly to follow them farther," he said; "and I think we have done enough to teach them a valuable lesson. Come."

He led the way back to where the first lot of wounded Tory youths lay, and was pleased to find Joe Scrogg among them. Joe had a pretty severe wound in the right leg, and was groaning dismally.

"Well, Joe," said Dick, pausing in front of the youth, "only a little more than an hour ago I gave you warning and told you you had better disband your force. Don't you wish you had taken my advice?"

"Yes, yes!" moaned Joe. "Oh, I'm killed! I jes' know I shell die!"

"Oh, I don't think there is any danger that any of your fellows will die, Joe. We didn't try to kill you, but aimed low so as to wound you."

"Is thet so?" in a wondering tone.

"Yes; but the next time, if you do not disband and behave yourselves, we will shoot to kill; and instead of getting a bullet in your leg you will get one through the heart! Do you understand?"

"Yes—oh, yes!"

"I'm glad that you do; and don't forget that unless you disband we will certainly get after you again."

"Oh, I won't furgit."

"Come, boys, we must be going," said Dick to the "Liberty Boys," whereat Joe set up a howl.

"Shorely ye won't go erway an' leave us heer ter die," he asked.

"Oh, you won't die, Joe," replied Dick; "you will suffer, of course, but you deserve to do so, and your comrades will be back presently to see what has become of you."

"I'm erfeerd they won't."

"Oh, yes, they will."

Then Dick and the "Liberty Boys" went back to where they had left their horses, mounted, and rode on their way, feeling that they had done a good thing in striking the band of Tory youths a blow.

"I think they will disband now," said Dick; "they d

not figure on getting themselves into such trouble when they went into the affair, and Joe, the ringleader, is pretty badly wounded, and will not feel like doing any work for some time to come."

"Serves him right," said Bob; "I am glad he got one of the bullets."

"And so am I."

The youths rode onward at a good pace and reached North Castle about ten o'clock. Dick had been in the 'Liberty Boys' quarters only a few minutes when he received a summons to appear before the commander-in-chief at headquarters.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE SNARE THE ENEMY SET."

On the evening of this same day, just as dusk was settling over all, three youths sat under a tree some fifty paces back from the road which traversed Manhattan Island from the north end down to New York City. The youths were Dick Slater, Bob Estabrook and Sam Sanderson, and they were bound for New York City on a mission for the commander-in-chief. They had, by making a wide detour and crossing the Harlem River half a mile below where the bridge was, succeeded in getting onto Manhattan Island, and were now at a point about halfway down its length—perhaps five miles from the city. The youths were eating a frugal lunch and keeping a wary eye out for redcoats.

"This is rather a peculiar affair we are engaged upon, Dick," remarked Bob.

"Yes, you are right, Bob."

"It is quite a mysterious affair, I should say," remarked Sam; "the idea of our going down into the city, having as our sole instructions the order to watch for a man with a red feather in his hat, and, when seen, to follow wheresoever he may lead."

"That is rather a mysterious order, and state of affairs," admitted Dick, with a smile.

"It certainly is!" agreed Bob. "What if we don't find any man with a red feather in his hat?"

"Then we will return to North Castle and so report."

"I wonder what it does mean, anyway?" asked Sam.

"Well, I haven't given the matter much thought," said Dick; "but my idea is that the man with the red feather in his hat is some patriot citizen, who is doing all he can to aid the great cause by furnishing the commander-in-

chief information. Doubtless he will have some papers for us which we will take back and deliver to General Washington."

"Likely that is it, Dick," agreed Bob.

"Well," said Sam, "our instructions are simple enough, and we can easily follow them; but I don't see how we can be sure of finding our man."

"I think there will be not much difficulty in that," said Dick; "all we will have to do is to walk up and down Broadway from the Common to Bowling Green, and sooner or later we will see our man."

"That does seem reasonable," said Bob; "well, how much longer will we wait here?"

"We will go at once," replied Dick; "it is almost dark now, and will be quite dark long before we reach the city."

The youths rose, mounted their horses and rode away toward the south. They rode slowly, as they were not in any great hurry; and then, too, they wished to be careful and avoid meeting any redcoats who might be abroad.

An hour later they came to a stop half a mile north of the Common—which is now City Hall Park, but was at that time at the extreme north end of the city. They led their horses in among the trees and tied them and then walked southward till they came to the Common. Here they paused long enough to make sure that there were no redcoats on the Common, and then they crossed it and entered Broadway at the point where it touched the Common.

They walked slowly down the street, keeping a sharp lookout all around them. They looked at the hat of every person they met, and were on the alert to catch sight of the red feather. Suddenly Bob gave utterance to a low exclamation. "There he is!" he said, in a low, cautious voice; "yonder is a man with a red feather in his hat!"

Dick and Sam looked in the direction indicated, and saw that Bob had spoken truly. "Come along," half whispered Dick, and they speedily overhauled the man in question, who was going in the same direction as themselves.

As Dick reached the man's side he leaned over till his mouth was close to the other's ear, and murmured the words: "For the cause of Liberty."

The man turned quickly and gave Dick and his two companions a searching look. He was a man of perhaps forty years of age and eminently respectable-looking.

"Come," he said, making a gesture; "follow me."

"Lead on," said Dick; "we will keep close behind you."

The man nodded and increased his pace to a very good walking gait. The youths kept close behind and followed their guide down Broadway four blocks, when he turned

to the left and went three blocks in that direction; again he turned toward the south, and when they had gone two blocks farther the man came to a stop in front of a very respectable-looking three-story house.

Beckoning to the three, he ran up the steps onto the stoop and rang the bell. The "Liberty Boys" followed, and had not much more than reached the stoop when the door opened.

"Come," said the man, entering unhesitatingly, and the youths followed. "This way, gentlemen," he added; "come to the library, as there we can be comfortable and transact our business at our leisure."

The youths kept close at their guide's heels, and half way down the hall he paused and opening a door, passed through into what was evidently a library. The youths followed and looked about them. The room had several chairs, a table, on which were some books, while many more books were on shelves along the wall.

The man locked the door the instant the "Liberty Boys" were in the room, and as the key clicked a portiere was suddenly drawn aside and the youths found themselves confronted by a dozen redecoats holding cocked and leveled muskets!

The surprise was complete. They had been expecting nothing of the kind, and not the least tinge of suspicion that all was not right had come to them until the moment of the denouement.

Now, however, that the trap was sprung, Dick and his comrades understood it. The enemy had set a snare for them, and they had walked right into it. They had been lured to this house by the man with the red feather in his hat, and were now in the power of the redecoats.

But Dick could not understand how it had happened. How had the redecoats known of the coming of himself and his comrades, and all about the red feather in the hat, and everything? This was something that they would learn in due time, though, he doubted not.

"Well," said the man who had lured them into the trap, "what do you think of the matter, my bold rebels?"

"I think it has been well carried out," said Dick, calmly; "you set the snare and we walked into it. But what puzzles me is, how did you know about the matter?"

The man laughed. "You told me about it," he said.

Dick showed his surprise. "We told you about it?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"I don't understand you; you must be joking, for we did nothing of the kind."

"Oh, yes, you did."

Dick shook his head. "We told no one," he said positively. "We would have been fools to do so."

"You did it, just the same, but—you didn't know you did it."

Dick and his comrades were more puzzled than ever, and they stared at the man in wondering amazement. "What do you mean?" queried Dick. "Explain. How could we do such a thing?"

"Easily enough."

"I don't see it that way."

"I will give you a hint: You three young men are from North Castle—oh, don't say a word in denial, for I know whereof I speak. You have come to New York for a purpose, and you paused at a point five miles from the city to eat luncheon and wait for darkness, did you not?"

Dick started, and a glimmering of the truth came to him. "Yes," he said, "we did."

"Exactly," with a smile; "and while eating you—some what indiscreetly, as you will no doubt be willing to admit—talked of your business to the city."

Dick nodded, a look of vexation and discomfiture on his face. "I see it all now," he said; "some person was hidden near and overheard our conversation."

"Quite right," smilingly; "and that person was—your humble servant," with a mocking bow.

"And you hastened into the city ahead of us and set this nice little snare for us, eh?"

"I did; and I think you will admit that it worked to perfection."

"Yes," admitted Dick, "it did."

"You are here, in our power. You are our prisoners, and I trust you will recognize the futility of offering resistance, and will surrender gracefully."

"Certainly, sir; it would be folly to try to resist."

"You speak only the truth. Kindly place your hands behind your backs."

The three did as told.

The man made a gesture and three of the men stood their muskets in the corner and taking up some bits of rope from off the floor, advanced and tied the prisoners' arms securely.

"Now disarm them," ordered the man, and the three redecoats quickly deprived the three youths of their weapons, which consisted of a pair of pistols to each.

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Dick.

"I am going to hold you prisoners here in this house for the present."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; you see, there is another task ahead of us, at

that is to capture the genuine 'man with the red feather in his hat.' "

Dick started and a look of dismay crossed his face. He gave his comrades a blank look, which was returned with interest. The three understood that they had, by talking of the affair, and thus giving an eavesdropper a chance to learn things that they did not wish known, not only gotten themselves in trouble, but had, in all likelihood, gotten the patriot, who was doing his best to aid the great cause, in trouble also. Doubtless he would be captured and all four would be shot or hanged.

Dick was glad to know, however, that the patriot had not yet been captured, and when he asked why they had not attended to this the man said that they had not had time.

"I had to hurry in order to get here ahead of you and make the arrangements for luring you into my net," he said; "and so I had no time to attempt to capture him. Now, however, I shall attend to the matter."

He then selected four of the men and took his departure with them, leaving the rest to stand guard over the three prisoners.

One, two, three hours passed and then the five returned. As they entered the room the hearts of the three leaped for joy, for they had come back empty-handed. There was no one with them.

"You didn't capture him, then?" exclaimed Dick.

"No, curses on the luck!" the man replied. "We looked high and low for him, but could see no signs of a man with a red feather in his hat."

"Good! I'm glad of it!"

The man frowned and glared angrily. "It will not help you any," he growled; "your fate is sealed, just the same."

"Perhaps so."

"Oh, there is not the least doubt regarding that."

"Well, granting that such is the case, that would not hinder us from being glad that the patriot escaped capture."

"No, I suppose not."

The man was silent a few minutes, and then he again turned to the prisoners and said: "Tell me who you are—give me your names, I mean."

Dick shook his head.

"You refuse?"

"Yes," replied Dick, nodding his head; "I am not going to say anything to aid you or give you any information. If you wish to know who we are, find out. All I will acknowledge is that we are patriots."

The man smiled sarcastically. "Then let me inform

you, Captain Dick Slater, that I know who you are. I do not have to find out."

"Then why did you waste time asking?"

"I wished to know who your comrades are."

"Oh!"

"I knew you all the time; I knew who you were when I was listening to your talk when you were eating your luncheon."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; and you might as well give me the names of your companions."

But Dick shook his head. "It would do us no good, so I shall do nothing of the kind."

"You don't believe in doing anything unless you are to receive benefit from it, eh?"

"You are right."

"Oh, very well; I will learn who they are sooner or later, and it doesn't make any particular difference, anyway. I know who you are, and you are the biggest fish of the lot."

He turned away and held a conversation in a low tone with some of the men; then he said to the ones who stood guard over the three: "Bring the prisoners along, men!"

He led the way out into the hall and up a flight of stairs. At the farther end of this hall he opened a door and motioned for the prisoners to be conducted into the room. This was done, and then he said to Dick:

"I am going to hold you prisoners in here till morning, and then I shall turn you over to General Howe. It will be useless for you to try to escape, as I shall leave men on guard here in front of the door. Good night, and pleasant dreams," the last in a mocking tone.

Then he left the room, the door was closed and bolted and the three "Liberty Boys" were left to think and talk the matter over at their leisure.

CHAPTER IX.

RESCUED.

The youths were in darkness, but they did not mind that. They could talk, just the same as if there was plenty of light.

"Well, this is rather rough on us, Dick!" remarked Bob.

"Yes, there is no doubt regarding that, Bob."

"It looks to me as if it was all up with us," said Sam.

"While there is life there is hope," said Dick.

"There don't seem to be much hope for us, though,"

from Bob.

"We won't despair," said Dick.

"I'm glad they didn't capture that man we were to meet," remarked Sam.

"And so am I," from Dick; "that would have been terrible, and I should never have forgiven myself had it happened, for we would have been to blame, on account of our talking of our business and permitting ourselves to be overheard by that redcoat."

"I guess this experience will teach us a lesson," said Bob. "After this we won't talk our business out loud around any place where there might be eavesdroppers."

"But I'm afraid the lesson won't be of much use to us," said Sam.

"Never say die," remarked Dick, encouragingly; "keep up your courage. We may be able to make our escape."

"Do you think there is any chance of our doing so?" asked Sam eagerly.

"Well, the chances are not so good as I would like, but we will at least make the attempt, if such a thing is possible."

"What can we do?" asked Bob.

"Well, for one thing, see if you can work your arms free."

"Mine are tied very tightly," was the reply.

"And mine," from Sam.

"So are mine; but we have the night before us, and a great deal may be accomplished by working hard and keeping steadily at it. Go to work and don't give up even if you seem not to have made any progress at the end of an hour."

Bob and Sam said they would do so, and the three went to work at their bonds. They worked steadily, but it seemed as if they made scarcely any headway whatever. They had been bound very securely.

Out in the hall they could hear the steady tramp, tramp of the sentinels, and realized that even if they should succeed in freeing their arms and legs, they would have a big task ahead of them in escaping from the room.

The youths were plucky enough, though, and they kept at the work and were still busy when midnight came. Another hour and then the youths heard something which startled and at the same time pleased them. This was no more or less than a peculiar rattling of the window-sash. It was not the wind, they knew, as the wind was not blowing strongly, and the sash had not rattled that way before.

There could be only one explanation of the affair, and that was that some one was there, trying to open the window. And this some one was likely to prove to be a friend—so Dick and his two comrades reasoned, and they

listened eagerly and hoped that the person, whoever it might be, would succeed in getting the window open.

Several minutes passed; the person outside working intermittently, and then a sliding sound was heard. The window was being pushed upward! The hearts of the prisoners leaped for joy. They believed that they were to be rescued.

Suddenly they heard the sound of a key turning in the lock of the door, and at the same instant they heard the sliding sound, followed by a little thump. The window had been lowered quickly. The youths, wishing to help make things as easy as possible for their unknown friend, dropped over upon the bunks on which they had been sitting and pretended to be sound asleep.

One of the guards had suddenly taken a notion that he would have a look at the prisoners, and had unlocked and opened the door. He saw the three youths lying there seemingly fast asleep, and then, flashing the light from his candle around the room, and seeing that everything seemed to be all right, he again closed and locked the door.

Instantly the youths again sat up, breathing in a relieved manner. Again they heard the sliding noise, and knew their friend was raising the window.

Presently the sliding sound ceased and then they heard a noise such as would be made by some one climbing cautiously through the window. Next they heard the faint sound of footsteps and then a voice, speaking in a faint whisper, was heard. "I am a friend," was what the voice said; "I have come to rescue you. Turn your backs toward me and I will cut your bonds."

The youths obeyed, and a minute later their arms were free. Next the ropes binding their legs were severed and they were entirely freed from their bonds.

"Come," now whispered their friend; "I have fastened a rope to the window-ledge and all we have to do is slide down it to the ground."

He led the way, the three following, and they succeeded in getting through the window and sliding down to the ground without having made any noise that could be heard by the guards out in the hall.

"Now follow me," said the man, in a low, cautious voice, and he led the way across the back yard and out into the alley. They made their way along the alley only a short distance, and then entered another back yard, which was only three or four removed from the one they had recently left.

The man led the way to the back door, which he unlocked and opened. "Enter," he said, standing aside, and the three did so. The man then followed and closed the

opened the door. They were at the rear end of what was a long hall, reaching evidently clear to the front door. It was so dark it was impossible to see anything distinctly where they were, but a light burned at the farther end of the hall.

"Come," said their friend, and he led the way half way down the hall. He paused and opened a door, then, and ushered the youths into a room which it was plain to see was the library. It was very similar to the room in the other house—the room in which they had been when made prisoners by the redcoats.

Lights were burning in this room, and the youths looked at their rescuer with interest. They saw a good-looking man of perhaps forty-five years of age. He waved his hand toward some easy chairs and said: "Be seated."

The youths sat down and looked at their host inquiringly. He understood, and, seating himself, looked smilingly at them, and said: "You are the messengers from the commander-in-chief of the continental army, are you not?"

"Yes," replied Dick.

"And you were instructed to come to the city and watch for a man who would have a red feather in his hat, were you not?"

"Yes; and, unfortunately, we were lured into a snare set for us by the British, the red feather in the hat being used as a means of doing this."

"I know that. But how did the British know about the red feather?"

Dick told him.

"Ah, I understand now," the man said; "well, you could not be expected to have any suspicion that your talk would be overheard, so are not to be blamed. As for me, I am the man who was to have worn a red feather in his hat—in fact, I did do so and was near at hand when you went away with the other man. I was not sure you were the man I was to look for until after I got a look at the man's hat and saw a red feather sticking in it. Then I knew there was something wrong. Still, I did not dare do anything to apprise you of your mistake, as the city is over-run with the British, and the man who was with you could have brought a hundred men to his assistance in a few moments, and we would all have been made prisoners. I allowed you, however, and when I saw you enter the house, which is only four away from my own, I made up my mind to await developments. So I entered my own house, took the feather out of my hat and watched from my window till I saw the five redcoats emerge and go away. I judged that they had gone in search of me."

"Yes, that is just what they did," said Dick; "and we were reproaching ourselves for having placed you in jeopardy. We did not know you had been a witness to all, and were on your guard."

"It turned out all right," the man said; "I was confident that you were prisoners in the house, as, after watching until two hours had passed, after the five had returned and re-entered the house, they did not bring you forth. I told myself that if they had been intending to take you to the prison they would have done so at once, and I set about finding out where you were held prisoner."

"This must have been a difficult task," said Dick.

"No, not very; I climbed the large tree which you noticed growing in the back yard of the house in which you were imprisoned, and managed to get a look into the hall. I saw the guards were stationed right at the end of the hall, and knew that you must be in the room at the end of the hall. That simplified matters and I took my time to it and rescued you, as you know."

"And for which we owe you our most sincere thanks," said Dick earnestly; "we were in a tight place, and I fear it would have gone hard with us had you not rescued us."

"I was glad to be of assistance to you; and, now, I will introduce myself. I am Charles Wainright, a true patriot, but so far have escaped being suspected by the British. I have secured and forwarded to General Washington considerable information in the past, and have some to send to him now, by you. I hope to be able to send him much more in the future."

"We hope so, Mr. Wainright," said Dick earnestly, "and I will say that we shall use our best endeavors to get the information safely to the commander-in-chief."

"Good! And I am sure you will succeed. I think it will be wise for you to get out of the city at the earliest possible moment—before your escape has been discovered, if possible, as it will be easier for you to get away."

"I think that will be the best plan," coincided Dick; "so if you will give us the information which we are to take to the commander-in-chief we will be away."

The man rose and went to a desk at one side of the room. From a drawer he took some papers, and these he brought and handed to Dick. I have written in full everything I have learned regarding the intended movements of the British," he said; "take the papers and deliver them into the hands of the commander-in-chief."

"Very well; we will do so, if it is possible," was Dick's reply.

The youth placed the papers in an inside pocket of his

coat and then, rising, said: "We had better go at once, I think."

"Yes, the sooner you are out of the city the better it will be for you," was the reply. "If your escape should be discovered, a big hue and cry would be raised and you would find it hard work getting away."

Mr. Wainright led the way out of the room and along the hall to the front door. He was just in the act of unbolting the door when the sound of shouting and of hurrying footsteps was heard outside.

"Listen!" the man half whispered.

All listened, and the sound of excited voices and hurrying footsteps continued, and a door was heard slam shut occasionally.

"What does it mean?" asked Sam.

"It means that your escape has been discovered!" said Mr. Wainright. "I fear you will have hard work escaping from the city."

"You are right," replied Dick; "and there will be considerable danger after we leave the city behind, too!"

"Yes, that is true; they know where you are from and in which direction you will go, and will hasten to try to head you off."

"Which makes it necessary, nay, imperative that we leave here at once," said Dick; "we must get to our horses, mount and get away ahead of the British, if such a thing is possible."

"It will be dangerous trying to escape from the city when there is such a hue and cry," said the man; "but, as you say, it is really the safest course, after all."

"Yes, if we can get out of the city we may be able to get clear away; but if we wait, while we might escape from the city the easier by so doing, we would be sure to be captured before we got off Manhattan Island."

"Yes, I think you are right."

"So we will start at once, Mr. Wainright; and I think we had better leave by way of the rear door."

"Yes, it is possible that there are no redcoats on watch at the rear. Come along and we will soon see whether or not this is the case."

They made their way along the hall and the man opened the rear door very slowly and carefully and peered out. "I don't see or hear anything suspicious," he said presently; "I think it will be safe for you to make the attempt to escape."

"Well, good-by," said Dick, in a whisper, shaking Mr. Wainright's hand.

"Good-by, and good luck go with you!" was the reply.

Then he shook hands with Bob and Sam and the three stole through the doorway and out into the back yard.

They were soon in the alley and made their way along at as good speed as was possible in the darkness. They too, they had to be careful that they did not run onto some of the redcoats.

They managed to get along safely for three blocks and then of a sudden, as they were crossing a street to enter another alley, they were startled by hearing loud yells, and looking up the street they saw a dozen men coming running toward them.

"Stop! Stop!" cried one of the men. "Stop, or we will shoot you down!"

"The redcoats!" said Dick grimly. "Now we must run for it, boys!"

They darted into the alley and ran at the top of their speed. They did not fear the shots of the enemy as yet for they would not fire until they reached the end of the alley. Onward they ran and were a hundred feet or more away when they again heard the voices of the pursuers.

"Stop, or we will fire!"

CHAPTER X.

DICK AND CAPTAIN SHELDON MEET AGAIN.

Of course, the "Liberty Boys" did not stop. They would rather be shot down while trying to escape than to surrender and be shot afterward. If anything, they ran faster.

Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack! The redcoats had indeed fired, as they had threatened to do, and the bullet whistled past the fugitives, luckily, however, doing no damage.

"Either of you hurt?" asked Dick as they ran.

"I'm not," replied Bob.

"Nor I," from Sam.

"Good! I think we will be able to get away from them now. Can you keep up this pace?"

The other two said they could for a while longer, at least. They kept on, and although their pursuers fired another volley it did no damage, and they were speeding away. They had kept going toward the north and suddenly they emerged upon the Common. They struck it at the southeast corner, and cutting diagonally across they headed for the main road which led northward.

They were half way across the Common when their pursuers

stoppers came forth from the alley and at the same instant the youths heard more redcoats coming from the direction of Broadway.

"I think we are ahead of them all," said Dick; "and if some can get our horses and mount and get away we will be all right."

"I hope so!" panted Bob. "I can tell you what it is, though, I'm mighty near pegged out!"

"And so am I!" from Sam.

"Well, hang on a little while longer," said Dick, "and we will be all right."

They were soon in the road and ran onward at their best speed. They stumbled and at times almost fell, but kept onward with dogged courage and perseverance. They were determined to reach their horses and make their escape or die trying.

Presently they came to the spot where they had led the horses into the timber, and they left the road and hastened through among the trees. They quickly came to where their horses had been tied and found them lying down, taking things easy. As the youths had not expected to be detained long in the city they had not unbridled and unaddled the horses, so all they had to do was to untie the halter straps and lead the animals back to the road.

The sound of hurrying footsteps could be heard down the road, and the youths knew they had no time to spare. They leaped into the saddles and dashed away, followed by shouts from the enemy.

They were not yet safe, however; they would not be until after they got off Manhattan Island, and this would take an hour of hard riding to accomplish, and necessitated their getting past the guards which were stationed at the Harlem River by the redcoats.

Onward they rode, steadily and rapidly, and when they were within a mile of the river they swerved aside from the main road, and by making a detour reached the stream half a mile from where the bridge stood. Here they crossed in safety and rode onward in high spirits.

"I guess we are safe now," said Dick.

"I think so," replied Bob.

"I hope so!" from Sam.

It turned out that they were safe, for they succeeded in reaching North Castle without encountering any redcoats. They got to the encampment at seven o'clock, and were just in time for breakfast.

As soon as he had eaten Dick went to headquarters to report to the commander-in-chief. General Washington greeted him pleasantly.

"So you are back, Dick?" he exclaimed. "Well, I am

glad to see you. Did you succeed in finding the man I sent you to find—Charles Wainright?"

"Yes, your excellency, we found him—or rather, he found us."

"How was that?"

Dick told him the story of the adventure with the redcoats, and the commander-in-chief listened with interest. "It was lucky he was able to rescue you!" he said, when Dick had finished.

"Yes, indeed," the youth agreed, and then he handed the commander-in-chief the papers given him by Mr. Wainright.

General Washington took the papers, opened them and read their contents. "Good!" he murmured when he had finished. "Mr. Wainright is indeed doing us good service in the city. He has sent me some valuable information."

He was silent for a few moments, and then said: "I think I will send you down to Judge Leslie's again, Dick; I wish you to take a letter to him."

"Very well, sir," was the reply. "When shall I start?"

"Let's see, you have been up all night; go to bed and sleep till noon, then eat your dinner and come here for the letter."

"Very well, sir." Then Dick saluted and took his departure.

He returned to the "Liberty Boys' " quarters, and throwing himself down was soon asleep. He slept till noon, then got up, ate his dinner and went to headquarters. General Washington handed him a letter and Dick went back, mounted his horse and set out.

He rode at an easy gait and two hours later arrived at the home of Judge Leslie. There was a bend in the road, just north of the judge's home, and as Dick rounded this bend he saw a man in the act of mounting a horse in front of the house. The man wore the uniform of a British officer, and Dick instantly recognized him as being Captain Sheldon.

"So he has been calling here again?" thought Dick. "Well, I should guess that it has done him little good."

The captain saw and recognized Dick at almost the same instant and a hoarse growl of rage escaped him. He sat still and waited till the youth was close up to him, then he cried out:

"So it is you, is it, you scoundrel?"

"Yes, it is I," replied Dick calmly; "and now that I come to look at you closely I see that it is you, you scoundrel!"

"What's that!" almost howled the captain. "Do you dare call me a scoundrel?"

"And why not? You are one!"

"I am not! Do you know what I am going to do to you, my fine fellow?"

Dick shook his head. "I haven't the least idea," was the cool reply.

"Well, I will enlighten you: I am going to kill you!" This was shot out with terrible fierceness, but it did not have any terrifying effect on Dick, who merely smiled.

"It is kind of you to tell me beforehand," he said quietly.

The smile on Dick's face angered the captain greatly and he drew his sword and flourished it in the air. "I see you have your sword!" he cried. "Draw and defend yourself, and I will cut you down right here in full view of your sweetheart, Lucy Leslie!"

Dick glanced toward the house and saw that Mr. and Mrs. Leslie and Lucy were out on the piazza, watching with breathless interest.

"You are making a mistake," said Dick calmly; "Miss Leslie is not my sweetheart!"

"It's a lie!" the captain cried. "You are saying that to try to get out of having to fight me!"

"Not at all. I am quite willing to fight—indeed, I am always glad of a chance to teach a minion of the tyrant king a lesson, but I wanted to set you right on the question of the young lady."

"Bah! I don't believe a word of what you have said, and I am going to have the satisfaction of carving you up before her eyes! Draw and defend yourself!"

"You are making a mistake, captain; you had better go on your way and allow me to pursue my course without hindrance."

"Never! You die right here and now, and by my hand!"

"You may slip up on that, captain."

"No danger!" with a scornful laugh. "I am one of the finest swordsmen in this country, and will make short work of you!"

"I give you warning that I am a good swordsman myself."

"You a swordsman? Ha! ha! ha! That is certainly amusing! The idea of an American clodhopper knowing how to handle the sword, the weapon of an officer and a gentleman!"

"You will find that I do know how to handle the sword," was the cold reply; "and I am going to prove to you that I am a gentleman, by conquering you with the weapon in question." As Dick spoke he drew his sword.

"Supposing we dismount?" the captain suggested.

"If you like," was the indifferent reply. "It does not matter to me."

"I think it will be better;" and the captain leaped to the ground.

Dick followed suit, and the next moment they stood with weapons in hand, facing each other.

"Now look out for yourself!" almost hissed the officer.

"And you do the same," was the cool reply.

"Bah!"

"You won't be in a condition of mind that will permit of your sneering by the time this affair has ended," said Dick quietly.

"Bosh! Defend yourself—if you can!"

"I think I can do so—and possibly more."

"Let's see you do it, then." The captain leaped forward and the swords clashed. The officer thought he would be able to play with his opponent as a cat would with a mouse, but he speedily learned his mistake. He tried a number of feints, and found himself foiled at every point. He became angry.

"I have been only amusing myself," he hissed; "now I shall go to work in earnest, and you had better say your prayers!"

"You look as if you were highly amused," said Dick with a derisive smile, which made the captain furious.

"I'll kill you!" he hissed. "Take that!"

He made a fierce lunge, but it was parried by Dick with ease. "Be careful, captain," the youth warned; "you are getting angry and reckless and are laying yourself open. I could have run you through, then."

"You lie, you rebel dog! If you could have done it you would. You are boasting."

"No, I mean every word I say and I will prove that I hold you at my mercy."

"Do it, then, and don't talk about it!"

"My dear captain, you have been doing most of the talking."

Dick seemed to lay himself open for a deadly thrust, and the British officer caught at the bait—for it was merely a bait. Dick had done it purposely, and when the captain lunged the youth parried and then with wonderful skill twisted the other's sword out of his hand, leaving him unarmed and defenseless.

"There, captain, I told you I could do as I pleased with you," said Dick quietly; "now take your weapon and go your way. I have no desire to take your life."

The captain stood still and stared at the youth for a few moments in silence, and then, without a word, he picked up his sword, placed it in the scabbard, mounted his horse, and rode away.

Dick entered the yard and approached the piazza, where

ed to see stood, and he was greeted heartily by Judge and very pleasantly by Lucy. It was the first time stood, seen Mrs. Leslie, to whom he was introduced by the She gave him rather a cool greeting, and he officer. stood the reason. She was a loyalist and did not it very well because Dick had vanquished the British eer. Dick understood that this was the reason the judge bern Lucy had not left the piazza while the duel was taking 's sake; they knew that Mrs. Leslie would do the same, and s afraid she would say something to disconcert Dick. 'May I see you in private, Judge Leslie?' asked Dick, er the greetings were over.

Yes, certainly," was the reply; and the judge led the old y to his private room and closed the door.

Here is a letter from the commander-in-chief," the ried th said, handing the judge the letter.

The judge took it and read it through. "Very good," said. "There will be no answer this time, Mr. Slater."

Dick shook hands with the judge and bade him good-by, yod said good-by to Mrs. Leslie, who was in the sitting-

om. Lucy was not in the house, and on stepping out Dick on the piazza he found that there was a handsome young

ow there, talking to the girl. Lucy blushed as she roduced the young man to Dick, and it was plain that was some one whom she thought a great deal of.

Dick was glad to know this, and he greeted the young ou a very cordially. Evidently Lucy had told him what op a ek had done for her and how he had overcome the British it y stain in a combat, for the young man, whose name was orge Thorp, greeted Dick with delight expressed on his that e-

Dick did not remain long. He was anxious to get home l visit with his mother and sister, and—he had a sweet- of rt, too, whom he was anxious to see. So he bade the o good-by, and, mounting his horse, rode away.

An hour and a half later he arrived at his home and t, a given a joyous greeting by his mother and sister.

How long can you stay, Dick?" asked Mrs. Slater, look- apte lovingly at her son.

I'm going to stay all night, mother, and till noon to- g h row."

Oh, I am so glad!"

I know somebody else who will be glad, too!" said ith, with a roguish smile.

Mrs. Slater smiled also, but half sadly, and Dick, who ked med to know what was passing in her mind, took his hder in his arms and smoothing her hair back, kissed her derly. "I am going to visit with you as much as I do wh Alice, mother!" he said. "I do not love either one

better than the other, though I love you each in a different way."

Mrs. Slater kissed Dick and smiled through happy tears. "I know you will never cease to love your mother, Dick," she said; "you are too good a boy for that."

"If I let any one take your place in my heart I would deserve to be shot, mother!" was the earnest reply. "No, I shall love you always, and my love for Alice only strengthens my love for you, if anything. Certainly it doesn't weaken it."

"I am sure of that, Dick; and I am only too glad that you love such a noble-hearted girl as Alice."

Dick placed Major in the shed and unbridled and unsaddled him; then giving the animal some hay and corn the youth returned to the house. He talked a few minutes and then went over to the home of the Estabrooks.

He was greeted pleasantly by Mr. and Mrs. Estabrook, and joyously by Alice.

"Where have you been, Dick?" the girl asked when they had been left alone in the sitting-room.

"Down to Judge Leslie's, Alice, to deliver a letter from the commander-in-chief."

"To Judge Leslie's!" The exclamation escaped the girl's lips almost unconsciously, and for an instant a cloud came over her face and then it cleared away and she smiled. "Forgive me, Dick!" she said, throwing her arms around his neck. "I—I—couldn't help it."

"That is all right, Alice," giving her a kiss. Then he added, in a matter-of-fact voice: "I made the acquaintance of a young fellow, there. His name is George Thorp, and I am confident that he and Lucy are sweethearts. She seemed very happy in his presence, at any rate."

Alice made no reply. She simply tightened the grasp of her arms about Dick's neck and gave him a kiss. She understood and was happy; and Dick understood and was happy also.

THE END.

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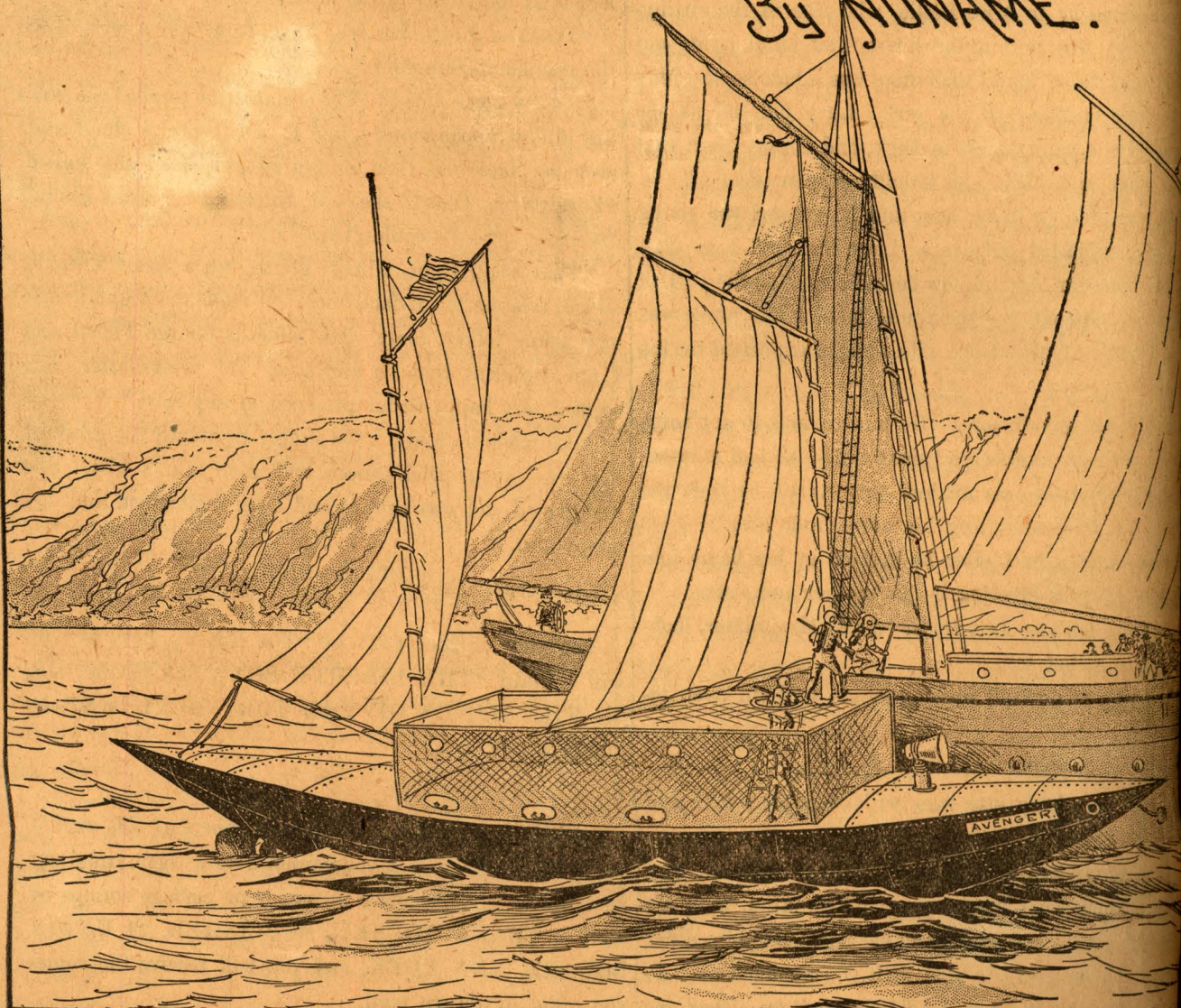
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